This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

MALTBY's

ILLUSTRATIONS, &c.

ILLUSTRATIONS

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

BY

EDWARD MALTBY, B. D.

DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

Cambridge,

PRINTED BY JOHN BURGES, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY;

AND SOLD BY F. AND C. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD; J. WHITE, FLEET-STREET; J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; W. H. LUNN, OXFORD-STREET, LONDON; J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE; MESSRS. HANWELL AND PARKER, AND J. COOKE, OXFORD; J. BURDON, WINTON; AND R. BEATNIFFE, NORWICH.

1802.

BT1101
M36

27791

BT1101
M36

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND,

GEORGE,

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

MY LORD,

THE opportunities I have had of witneſſing your zeal for the promotion of Sacred Knowledge, would have induced me to prefix your name to the following work, even if I had not previouſly aſſured myſelf of your permiſſion.

Your Lordſhip's conduct as a Prelate has been marked by a ſtrict and diſcriminating inquiry into the pretenſions of Candidates for Holy Orders. It has been your principle to diſtinguiſh with warm approbation thoſe, who have applied diligently to the ſtudies of their profeſſion; and

a to

to reject with impartiality ſuch as have not duly qualified themſelves for the important taſk of religious inſtruction.—Your Lordſhip has done ſtill more.—Having obſerved the inconvenience ariſing from the want of a proper foundation for Theological acquirements, you devoted your time and thoughts to the compoſition of a Treatiſe, from which the ſtudent in Divinity may not only gain a general acquaintance with the ſubject, but alſo be aſſiſted in extending his inquiries to the collateral branches of that moſt invaluable ſcience.

I CAN ſcarcely flatter myſelf, my Lord, that an attempt, ſo humble as mine, can be materially uſeful in promoting the great ends, which your Lordſhip has ſo laudably kept in view. But I ſhall not regret the attempt I have made, if it only give me an opportunity of bearing teſtimony to your Lordſhip's exertions;

tions, and of expreſſing my ardent hope, that ſuch exertions may induce the co-operation of all, whoſe ſtation in the Church enables them to purſue meaſures equally honourable to themſelves, and uſeful to the cauſe of Chriſtianity.

I AM the more anxious to hold up your Lordſhip's conduct in theſe inſtances to applauſe and to imitation, becauſe a ſort of paradoxical diſtinction has been ſometimes ſet up between ſound Divines and uſeful Miniſters—a diſtinction very convenient, no doubt, for thoſe, who would deprive the Church of it's moſt effectual defence againſt the oppoſite, but equally fatal, extremes of Infidelity and Fanaticiſm. Well does it behove the appointed Guardians of our national faith to conſider, by what better means they can ſecure it from the dangers with

which it is menaced, by an avowed contempt for all religion on the one hand, and a fantaſtic pretence to exceſſive ſanctity on the other, than by encouraging an accurate and profound knowledge of the holy Scriptures among the Teachers of religion. A learned Clergy, employing their knowledge with zeal, and tempering their zeal with charity, is the beſt preſervative, under Providence, againſt that ignorance and immorality, which, acting upon different intellects and different tempers, may frequently be regarded as alike productive of Scepticiſm and Superſtition.

That your Lordſhip may enjoy a continuance of health and happineſs, and be long enabled to diſtinguiſh yourſelf in the cauſe of true religion; whether it be openly aſſailed by the furious zeal of the Unbe-

Unbeliever, or ſecretly undermined by the ſpecious errours of the Enthuſiaſt; is, My Lord, the unfeigned wiſh of

Your Lordſhip's

Truly Faithful,

and Obedient Servant,

EDWARD MALTBY.

PREFACE.

DURING a very attentive perusal of the Books of the New Testament, I was occasionally struck with internal marks of truth; some of which, so far as my recollection went, had not been observed at all, and others did not appear to have been noticed, according to their real importance, by any writers who had fallen in my way. My conviction was gradually strengthened, in proportion as the instances which occurred to me became more numerous, and my reflection upon them more direct and intense. From time to time I committed my observations to paper, without any other view, at first, than that of preserving them for my own use. Some of them, however, furnished materials for Sermons; and as the collection insensibly increased, I began at length to consider them as not wholly unworthy of public attention.

To the Public therefore I now commit them with the earnest hope, that the rectitude

titude of my intention, and my reverential ſenſe of the importance which belongs to ſubjects of Religion, will atone for thoſe deficiencies, which, I am well aware, may be diſcovered by readers of more extenſive erudition, and more profound reſearch. In excuſe for ſome appearances of haſte or forgetfulneſs, I may plead inceſſant and, I hope, uſeful occupation in matters not always congenial with an early and habitual fondneſs for Literature. Surely I may flatter myſelf, without the imputation of extravagant vanity, that the execution of this work would have been leſs imperfect, if the various and urgent duties of my profeſſion and ſituation had allowed me either to think, or to reviſe my thoughts, with fewer interruptions.

It is however a ſource of conſiderable gratification to me, that many defects, which might have ariſen from my own want of information or want of leiſure, have been ſupplied by the ſuperiour knowledge and diſcernment of the friends, whom I occaſionally conſulted. Among theſe is a Man, whoſe name I am not at liberty to mention in this Preface, but to whoſe worth I do no more than juſtice, when I ſpeak of him in the

the words, which Olivet employed to deſcribe the character of Francis Odin. Homo eſt antiquis imbutus perindè ſtudiis ac moribus. Quem juvenis ut magiſtrum colui: grandior habui devinctum arctiſſimâ neceſſitudine, et habebo ſemper *.

I BEG leave moſt reſpectfully to offer my acknowledgments to the Syndics of the Univerſity preſs, for the readineſs and liberality, with which they conſented to defray the expense of this publication. I have only to expreſs my humble and unfeigned hope, that, by promoting in ſome degree a more effectual belief in the evidences of Revealed Religion, this Volume may be found not entirely undeſerving of the protection, which they have afforded it.

* Præfat. ad Cic. Opp. p. 21. Amſtel. 1745.

Vicarage Houſe,
Buckden,
Oct. 30. 1801.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

*Brief ſtatement of external evidence.—Particular inquiry into the proof ariſing from internal marks.—*1. *Style and idiom.—*2. *Minuteneſs of detail.—*3. *Abſence of all party ſpirit.—*4. *Candour of the writers, in relating their own failings.—*5. *Agreement of the facts with the ſuppoſition of a miraculous interference.—*6. *Uniform preſervation of character.—*7. *Various proofs, ariſing from a compariſon of the genuine Scriptures with the Apocryphal Books.* pp. 1—67.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PROOF ARISING FROM THE NATURE AND STRENGTH OF THE PREJUDICES OF THE JEWS.

Peculiarities in the character of the Jewiſh people.—Prophecies concerning the Meſſiah.—Expectations formed in conſequence of them.—Appearance of falſe prophets.—In what manner Jeſus appeared, in the character of the expected Meſſiah.—His conduct and doctrine.—Goſpel, how preached after his death.—The Chriſtian religion not founded in impoſture, or enthuſiaſm.—The actions of Jeſus conſidered

ſidered with reference to each of theſe ſuppoſitions. —Jewiſh zealots.—Inference from the foregoing facts.—Recapitulation. pp. 68—116.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES.

How far the Diſciples reſembled their countrymen.—Who they were.—Addreſs of Jeſus to them, after they were choſen.—Their ignorance of their Maſter's real office, and diſtruſt of his power.—Conduct at the transfiguration.—Diſpoſition to interpret the prophecies literally.—Candid repreſentation of their own conduct, a proof of their veracity.—Diſputes who ſhould be the greateſt.—Triumphant entry of Jeſus Chriſt into Jeruſalem.—The laſt ſupper.—The garden.—Apprehenſion of Jeſus.—Sentiments and conduct of the diſciples at that event.—Circumſtances attending the reſurrection.—Diſciples, at length convinced, boldly preach a crucified Meſſiah.—How this change is to be accounted for.—Some remnant of their old prejudices and miſtakes.—Converſion of Cornelius.—Reflections upon that event.—Edict of the council at Jeruſalem.—Concluſion warranted by theſe facts, and others harmonizing with them. pp. 117—162.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE DISCIPLES DURING THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

Introduction and diviſion of the ſubject.—1ſt, proofs from Scripture, that this power was conferred—

and

and 2dly, actually exerciſed.—3dly, The purpoſe for which it was beſtowed.—Laſtly, the effects it produced on the minds of the Apoſtles.—One inſtance againſt the exerciſe of this power examined.—Reaſons aſſigned for it.—Further reflections upon the ſubject.—Uniformity of the divine diſpenſations.—Reſult of this inquiry favourable to the truth of our Holy Religion.—Vindication of the Apoſtles' character. pp. 163—202.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE SCHEME OF THE GOSPEL.

Difference, between the mode and extent of Chriſt's preaching and that of the Apoſtles, ſtated.—made the ground of an objection by infidels.—Deſign of the Goſpel.—offered to the Jews firſt,—but intended from the firſt to comprehend the Gentiles.—Various proofs of this intention.—Rejection of it by the Jews foretold by our Lord, as well as the deſtruction of the Jewiſh polity.—Diſciples acted in conformity with the views and directions of their Maſter.—If they had made any alteration, it would have been of a very different kind from that imputed to them.—No motive can be aſſigned for their conduct in this particular, but their well-grounded confidence in the pretenſions of Jeſus to the title of Meſſiah.—Improbabilities of any other ſuppoſition. pp. 203—232.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

Malignity and extent of the charge, urged by unbelievers againſt the Chriſtian Religion.—Particularly as it affects the character of Jeſus.—An objection

objection against producing the testimony of his friends obviated.—Concessions of his adversaries upon this point.—Vanini.—Chubb.—Bolingbroke.—Rousseau.—Voltaire.—Paine.—Gibbon.—Lequinio.—What the intentions of Jesus must have been, according to the assumptions of his enemies.—Their own concessions shewn to be at variance with these assumptions.—Different grounds of argument, taken by unbelivers, examined.—The imputation of imposture shewn to be inconsistent with the character of the virtues, which they allow him to have possessed.—Near inspection, to which the conduct of our Lord was subjected.—Yet no instance of any deviation from moral rectitude.—Compared with Minos.—Numa.—Lycurgus.—Mahomet.—The scheme of Jesus, if founded in fraud, less excusable than those of these acknowledged deceivers.—Consequently not imputable to one of his good character.—Inquiry whether he could have been actuated by any good motive to assume false pretensions,—answered in the negative. pp. 233—284.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GODWIN'S MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND THE CHARACTER OF IT'S FOUNDER EXAMINED.

Passage from Mr. Godwin's Enquirer quoted.—The charges, contained in it, reduced to three heads.—1. That bigotry and intolerance are encouraged by the Christian religion.—2. That an improper stress is laid upon faith.—3. That there are certain moral defects in the character and temper of Jesus Christ.—Each of these charges examined separately—and confuted, partly by historical documents

ments—partly by a critical inquiry into the texts, Mark xvi. 16. Math. xxiii. 33.—*This writer ſhewn to have miſunderſtood or perverted them.—A fair deduction made, from the ſubjects of the preceding inquiry, in favour of Chriſtianity.* pp. 285—325.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIEW OF THE DEFECTS OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE MAHOMETAN RELIGION.

Connection of the propoſed inquiry with the deſign of this work.—Situation of the Roman and Perſian Empires.—Genius and temper of the Arabs.—Illuſtrious deſcent of the Impoſtor.—Protected by his uncle, the Prince of Mecca.—Advantageous marriage—Qualifications of mind and body.—Conceives the deſign of eſtabliſhing a new religion.—Slow progreſs of this deſign.—Danger.—Flight to Medina.—Aſſumption of temporal power.—Inducements to his followers.—Plunder.—Paradiſe.—Predeſtination.—Succeſs in his wars.—Fanaticiſm of his followers accounted for.—Objects of worſhip changed, but modes of worſhip retained.—Doctrine of one ſupreme God not new in Arabia.—No change in moral habits.—Senſual pleaſures allowed.—Koran.—Extravagant claims in favour of it refuted.—Deficiency of internal and external evidence.—Death of the impoſtor.—Appeal to infidels on behalf of our holy Religion. pp. 326—367.

THESIS.

THESIS.

Nequit per ſe humana ratio cognitione ſatis plenâ et certâ aſſequi, quo potiſſimùm modo Deus ſit colendus, quæ ſint hominum officia, vita denique futura ſit, nè-ne, æterna. pp. 370—407.

CONCIO AD CLERUM.

JUDIC. xi. COMM. 39.

Expletiſque duobus menſibus, reverſa eſt ad patrem ſuum: et fecit ei ſicut voverat, quæ ignorabat virum. pag. 409.

CORRIGENDA.

Page. 40. l. 25. *for* ſimply *r.* merely.
48. l. 9. *r.* μετὰ.
60. not. l. 22. *r.* p. 36.
61. l. 10. *r.* their own names.
95. l. 13. *r.* or at leaſt.
98. l. penult. *r.* ſuppoſition.
99. l. 22. for them *r.* him.
109. l. 1. for ſenſe *r.* meaning.
200. l. 21, 22. 201. l. 1. } put a comma after teſtimony, dele ſemicolon after cenſure, and place it after inconſiſtency.
241. l. 5. after juſt, *put* a colon.
271. l. 17. before ſcruple, *inſert* leſs.
299. l. 7. for enforcing *r.* producing.
312. not. l. penult. *r.* חרם
346. l. 15. *r.* allured.
374. l. penult. ſee the note in p. 375.
405. l. 3. *r.* jactitaverint.
429. l. 1. *r.* ſibi.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Brief ſtatement of external evidence.—Particular enquiry into the proof ariſing from internal marks.—1. Style and idiom.—2. Minuteneſs of detail.—3. Abſence of all party ſpirit.—4. Candour of the Writers, in relating their own failings.—5. Agreement of the facts, with the ſuppoſition of a miraculous interference.—6. Uniform preſervation of character.—7. Various proofs, ariſing from a compariſon of the genuine Scriptures with the Apocryphal Books.

THE ſame mode of reaſoning, by which the compoſitions of any profane author, are proved to be genuine and authentic*, may be applied to the writings of the Evangeliſts

* "It may be of uſe," ſays Biſhop Watſon in his maſterly Apology for the Bible, "to ſtate, diſtinctly, the difference between the genuineneſs, and the authenticity of a book. A genuine book, is that which was written by the perſon whoſe

geliſts and Apoſtles with additional force. No books whatſoever have been quoted ſo frequently, or by ſuch an uninterrupted ſeries of ſucceſſive authors, ſince their firſt appearance: nor are Manuſcripts extant of the works of any other Writer, equal in number and in antiquity, to thoſe of the different books of the New Teſtament.

This argument cannot be conteſted without overthrowing the foundation of all hiſtorical teſtimony, without bringing into diſpute the claim of every antient writer to the works which paſs under his name. Such a proof then ought to be deciſive; and every addition to it may ſeem unneceſſary. Yet as it is the property of truth, to admit the cloſeſt inſpection without any diminution of it's beauty; and as every queſtion of importance ſhould be placed in the moſt varied lights under which it can be viewed, it may not be improper nor uſeleſs to conſider the internal proofs, which the canonical writings of the New Teſtament afford to their own genuineneſs and authenticity.

In

name it bears, as the author of it. An authentic book, is that which relates matters of fact, as they really happened." p. 53. See Michaelis, Chapter 2. particularly p. 24, &c. I refer of courſe to the edition by Marſh, which is every way worthy of the original, and truly an honour to the Biblical Literature of this country.

In the firſt place, the ſtyle and language of theſe books ſupply ſtrong indications, that they were written about the time, and by the ſort of men, to which they are aſcribed. This argument will undoubtedly be convincing in proportion to the knowledge the reader has of the original languages, to which the writers were accuſtomed, thoſe, in which they thought and wrote: but even they, who are not poſſeſſed of this information, may be ſatisfied by the concurring teſtimony of the beſt judges upon this head.

The ſtyle of theſe volumes is very different from that which is uſed by the native Greek authors *; the claſſical writers as they are called.

* Any tolerable judge of the Greek language, who examines with attention a page of the New Teſtament, cannot fail to remark certain peculiarities of expreſſion; and if he refers to commentators of the moſt critical diſcernment and extenſive reading in the Oriental tongues, he will diſcover whence many of theſe peculiarities flow. That the air and form of theſe expreſſions is derived from the religious ſentiments and aſſociations of the Jews, and the revolutions which their language underwent prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, he will be ſatisfied, if he will peruſe the conceſſions of Salmaſius in his elaborate treatiſe de Helleniſticâ, the learned diſquiſitions of Michaelis, part 1. capp. 4. and 5. and above all, the judicious remarks of Dr. Campbell, Diſſertation 1. part 1. Diſſ. II. p. 2. and preface to Matthew's Goſpel.

Erneſti alſo has treated this ſubject, with his uſual learning and judgement, in his Inſtitutio Interpretis Novi Teſtamenti, p. 1. ſect. 2. c. 3. An edition of this invaluable little treatiſe has been publiſhed lately by Ammon, which I ſhould be happy to ſee printed in England.

called. Nor is the difference confined to ſingle words, but it is apparent in the combination of phraſes, in the ſtructure of periods, and in the want as well as redundance of ſome, and in the miſapplication of other, con-

It may be here obſerved, that the cleareſt light is thrown upon the meaning of the Greek Teſtament, not by thoſe commentators and lexicographers, who have confined themſelves to the pure native Greek authors; but by thoſe, who have combined the ſtudy of Greek with a profound knowledge of the Oriental languages. Thus in inveſtigating the preciſe import of any ſingle word, recourſe ſhould not be had to Stephens, or Damm, or even Budæus, ſo much as to Schwartz, Schoettgenius, and Schleuſner.—And of the profeſſed commentators it may, I think, with truth be aſſerted, that Lightfoot and Schoettgenius, who have confined themſelves almoſt entirely to the Rabbinical writings, throw more light upon the language and the alluſions of the ſacred volumes, than almoſt all other commentators whatſoever.—Having examined their annotations upon the ten firſt chapters of St. Matthew, with a view to determine in ſome degree the quantity of aſſiſtance afforded to the readers of that Goſpel, I reckoned up more than one hundred paſſages in which their labours have been materially uſeful.

Upon the ſubject of the foregoing note, I would more particularly refer the reader to pp. 120.—123. and 142. of Salmaſius, to pp. 111. 135. 139. 155. 179. of Michaelis, and to pp. 16.—22. of Dr. Campbell's firſt vol. as well as to the explanations he has given of ſome words of frequent occurrence in the New Teſtament, in Diſſertations V. VI. VII. IX. A judicious account of the ſtyle of the New Teſtament may be alſo found in Father Simon's Critical Hiſtory, part 2. c. 26.—28. The Engliſh reader may conſult the inſtances produced in Collyer's Sacred Interpreter, Vol. I. p. 75.—91. Dr. Jennings has alſo noticed many of theſe peculiarities in his Jewiſh Antiquities, Vol. I. pp. 112.—121. which is rather remarkable, as he ſpeaks with ſo much complacency of the hypotheſis of Pfochenius and Blackwall, the erroneouſneſs of which is ſo apparent, that it needed not the complete refutation it has received from Dr. Campbell.

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY
CALIFORNIA

connective particles *, upon the proper uſe of which the purity and elegance of the Greek language greatly depends.

In the hiſtorical books, as well as in the Epiſtles, but particularly in the former, traces are to be diſcerned in every page, (I might almoſt ſay, in every ſentence) of a manner of thinking and of expreſſion, very conſonant with the opinions and the practices of the inhabitants of Judæa. The vernacular language of the Jews, at the period to which theſe writings are uſually referred, has been termed by Jerome, and with ſome propriety, Syro-Chaldaic †. It is not indeed entirely Chaldee, the language to which the Iſraelites were accuſtomed in their captivity; nor is it pure Syriac, the language of the inhabitants of the neighbouring country; but it is a mixture of both, with a ſtrong tincture of

* See the facts completely aſcertained by Michaelis, pp. 123, 125. and the cauſe inveſtigated, p. 114.

† See Campbell, Vol. II. p. 16. and 20.—24. Michaelis with geographical preciſion ſays, "The language ſpoken in common life by the Jews in Paleſtine was that, which may very properly be called Aramæan, thoſe of Jeruſalem and Judæa ſpeaking the Eaſt-Aramæan or Chaldee, and thoſe of Galilee the Weſt-Aramæan or Syriac, two dialects that differed rather in pronunciation than in words." p. 135. Cùm Hebraicam dico (ſays Salmaſius) eam ipſam intelligo quæ tum ſic vocabatur, quamvis Syriacum potiùs eſſet idioma ab antiquâ Hebraicâ multùm diverſum. Epiſt. Dedicat. p. 28.

of the old Hebrew idiom *. There are moreover evident marks in theſe volumes of the change, which the Macedonian † conqueſts introduced into the language of the conquered countries; and there is a variety not only of Latin phraſes, but of Latin words ‡ incorporated, and as it were domiciliated, into the vernacular tongue. In this laſt particular, the ſtyle of the New Teſtament is found to differ from that of the Septuagint verſion, which is much more free, if not || entirely ſo, from any mixture of Latin phraſeology or idiom. So that, although theſe different collections of writings are compoſed in the ſame kind of Greek, which has been termed the Helleniſtic dialect §, but is indeed more

* For the name "Hebrew" conſult Campbell, Vol. I. p. 3. II. p. 17. and 20. for the retention of the "idioms" Vol. I. p. 48.

† Theſe conqueſts produced what was called the Alexandrine idiom, traces of which are found in the New Teſtament. See Salmaſius, pp. 95. 102. 264. and 442 —447. Michaelis has devoted a ſection, the ſeventh of Chap. 4. to this ſubject.

‡ Salmaſ. pp. 94. 121.—123. 140. Mich. ib. ſect. X.

|| In Novo (ſc. Teſtamento) multæ voces Romanæ, multæ phraſes Latinæ occurrunt, quæ nuſquàm in vetere comparent. Salmaſ. p. 251.

§ The diſpute between ſome eminent ſcholars of the ſixteenth and ſeventeenth centuries concerning this appellation is well known. The controverſy certainly turned too much upon names, yet it had it's uſe, ſince it brought forward much curious criticiſm upon the language of the New Teſtament. I muſt confeſs, I think Salmaſius has made out his point as to the impropriety of both the terms, which were firſt adopted by Scaliger

more properly the Greek of the Synagogue, ſtill there is this marked diſtinction between them; which ſhews that the one muſt have been written, after the Macedonians had obtained a conſiderable influence over the affairs of Judea, while the other bears evident

Scaliger and Druſius. (Vid. Erneſti Interpr. N. T. p. 1. ſ. 2. c. 3. ſ. 16.) Yet he has carried his argument much too far, in ſuppoſing the Apoſtles to have been entirely unacquainted with the Greek language, and with the Septuagint Verſion. With regard to the Ἑλληνισταὶ mentioned in the Acts, I am not quite ſatisfied that he is wrong. Upon the whole however, I am diſpoſed to acquieſce in the determination of Harles, "Si quis aut nationem, quæ uſa fuiſſet peculiari græco dicendi genere, aut peculiarem græcam dialectum intelligit, eamque helleniſticam vocat, tunc nego, linguam eſſe helleniſticam. Contrà, ſi quis illam dicendi rationem ex linguâ hebraicâ et græcâ mixtam, quæ Judæis inter Ἕλληνας viventibus ab educatione, conſuetudine, uſuque tam hebraici codicis, quam verſionis τῶν LXX. propria quaſi fuit et vulgaris, Helleniſticam dixerit, equidem non adeò diſſentirem. Introductio in Hiſt. Ling. Gr. Tom. II. pars 2. p. 69. Altenburgi 1795.

See Campb. Vol. I. p. 12. and 23. Simon argues that Salmaſius contended about words.—He has replied to this objection in the Dedication prefixed to his Commentarius, pp. 31. and 50. I am not ſo fortunate as to poſſeſs his other treatiſe on this ſubject, which I ſuppoſe he thought concluſive, ſince he gave it the title of Funus Linguæ Helleniſticæ. It may be worth while, before we quit the ſubject, to ſee what appellation he is willing to beſtow upon this peculiar ſtyle. "Concludamus igitur non Helleniſticum fuiſſe ſtilum Novi Teſtamenti, ſed partim idioticum Syriacum, partim ἑρμηνευτικόν. Nam Syriaſmos ex utroque habet, ſed præcipuè ex verſionis genere. Phraſium autem rationem nihil facere ad idiomatum differentiam conſtituendam jam ſuprà docuimus. Veteris Teſtamenti dictio partim etiam ἑρμηνευτική, quod eloquutionem ſpectat, ex Hebræo ad verbum expreſſam, partim Macedonica propter Macedonum in Ægypto et Syriâ ſub Alexandri ſucceſſoribus firmatum imperium." p. 264.

dent tokens of the prevalence of the Roman arms. The hiſtorical facts, mentioned and alluded to in various parts of the New Teſtament, will not admit any reaſonable doubt, but that the books muſt have been written after the acceſſion of Tiberius to the Empire; but even if this were not the caſe, theſe internal marks would ſhew, that the Romans had eſtabliſhed themſelves in that part of the world, ſufficiently to have effected a conſiderable change in the language of the inhabitants. On the other hand, as Michaelis obſerves, "The Hebraiſms and Syriaſms, with which theſe writings abound, ſhew them to have been written by men of Hebrew origin." He juſtly concludes from this fact, that they were productions of the firſt century; "ſince after the deceaſe of the Jewiſh converts to Chriſtianity, we find hardly any inſtance of Jews who turned preachers of the Goſpel; and the Chriſtian fathers were for the moſt part totally ignorant of Hebrew *."

With reſpect to the character and condition of the writers, we are juſtified in concluding, from the reſemblance to the phraſeology of the old Teſtament, and to the ſtyle

* Pag. 45.

ſtyle of the Septuagint Verſion *, from the introduction of Syriac and Chaldaic modes of expreſſion, and from the thorough knowledge which theſe volumes exhibit of Jewiſh cuſtoms and writings, not only that the writers were extremely converſant with the language of Paleſtine, but alſo that they were Jews by religion; ſince none but Jews were likely to attain ſuch an inſight into all that concerns Jewiſh laws and opinions, or could be enabled to produce compoſitions, ſimilar, in ſo many marked peculiarities, to the Rabbinical and Talmudical writings †.

THERE

* Salmaſius contends againſt all probability, that the Apoſtles never uſed the Septuagint verſion, p. 252. Erneſti maintains that they never quoted it (Vid. Michaelis, Vol. I. p. 231.) which is not only a different queſtion, but one more difficult of ſolution.—No impartial judge will deny, that there is a ſtrong and frequent reſemblance between the Greek of the LXX. and the New Teſtament. Indeed what Salmaſius ſays of the former in another place, is equally applicable to the latter. Quocunque nomine vocari placeat eam eloquutionem, quâ concepta eſt Septuagînta Interpretum editio, certum eſſe, eam plures Hebraiſmos et Syriaſmos intertextos Græcæ orationi corpori, quaſi notas ac nævos peculiares, oſtentare. Ep. Dedic. p. 31. It is true, he puts this remark into the mouth of his opponent, yet he elſewhere allows it's accuracy, ſee p. 34. Nam de re ſemper inter omnes conſtitit, verba eſſe Græca, phraſim Hebraicam, p. 50. See alſo Campb. Vol. I. pp. 10, 11.

† On the great aſſiſtance to be derived from theſe ſources towards the more accurate interpretation of the New Teſtament, ſee what has been ſaid before of Lightfoot and Schoettgenius. See alſo Michaelis, pp. 129. 182. and the teſtimony of Surenhuſius, in his preface to the Horæ Hebraicæ and Talmudicæ

THERE is moreover another ſtrong argument for the authenticity of theſe writings, the force of which will be acknowledged by the accurate obſervers of language. Very many of the Greek words found in the New Teſtament, are not ſuch as were adopted by men of education, and the higher and more poliſhed ranks of life, but ſuch as were in uſe with the common * people. Now this ſhews, that

mudicæ of Schoettgenius, ſect. 4. In the ſame preface, an objection to the ſuppoſed want of antiquity in theſe writings is ſucceſsfully encountered. See ſect. 13. and 14.

* No critic ſeems to have taken more pains in pointing out the qualities of this vulgar idiom (this χυδαιότης or χυδαιολογία, as it is ſtyled) and in marking the inſtances, which occur in the New Teſtament than Salmaſius. See his treatiſe De Helleniſticâ, pp. 95—113. He diſcriminates the ἰδιωτικὰς χαρακτῆρ p. 128. See alſo pp. 144. 250. 254, and 260. Simon in c. 28. ad fin. and Campbell, Diſſ. I. agree with Salmaſius as to this fact, and they produce in corroboration of it a variety of paſſages, equally ſtrong and appoſite, from Origen and Chryſoſtom.

With reſpect to the charge of *obſcurity*, which Simon has taken occaſion from this circumſtance to urge againſt the language of the New Teſtament, ſee Salmaſius, p. 131. and Erneſti, loc. ſup. cit. ſect. 14. and 15. Certain it is, that the *common* language would be beſt underſtood by thoſe to whom Chriſtianity was firſt taught, and by the teachers themſelves. Michaelis ſeems too much afraid of making any conceſſions on the ſubject of this idiomatic language pp. 156. 171. Yet he more than once wiſhes for the aſſiſtance of antient inſcriptions, ſolely with a view to the explanation of the provincialiſms and idiotiſms. See pp. 170. and 176. Perhaps this eminent critic would not have taken the alarm, which he ſeems to have done, if he had been aware of the judicious diſtinction made by our learned countryman. "It is pertinent, however, to obſerve that the above remarks on the Greek of the New Teſtament, do not imply that there was any

that the writers became acquainted with the language in conſequence of an actual intercourſe with thoſe who ſpoke it, rather than from any ſtudy of books: and that intercourſe muſt have been very much confined to the middling, or even lower claſſes, ſince the words and phraſes, moſt frequently uſed by them, paſſed current only among the vulgar. There are undoubtedly many plain intimations* given throughout theſe books, that

any thing, which could be called idiomatical or vulgar in the language of our Lord himſelf, who taught always in his mother tongue. His Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, on the contrary, who wrote in Greek, were, in writing, obliged to tranſlate the inſtructions received from him into a foreign language of a very different ſtructure, and for the uſe of people accuſtomed to a peculiar idiom. The apparently reſpectful manner in which our Saviour was accoſted by all ranks of his countrymen, and in which they ſpoke of his teaching, ſhews that he was univerſally conſidered as a perſon of eminent knowledge and abilities. It was the amazing ſucceſs of his diſcourſes to the people, in commanding the attention and reverence of all who heard him, which firſt awaked the jealouſy of the Scribes and Phariſees." Campbell, Vol. I. p. 23.

It may be proper to ſtate that in the year 1767, a work was publiſhed at Naples with the following title. Dominici Diodati J. C. Neapolitani de Chriſto Græcè loquente Exercitatio, quâ oſtenditur, Græcam, ſive Helleniſticam linguam cùm Judæis omnibus, tùm ipſi adeò Chriſto Domino et Apoſtolis, nativam, ac vernaculam fuiſſe. It is written, as I am told by a learned friend, with acuteneſs rather than erudition, and contains no argument of real weight againſt the generally received opinion of ſcholars.

* It is obvious to cite ſuch paſſages as Mark i. 16. ii. 14. John xxi. 3. 7. where the occupations of the Apoſtles are plainly and profeſſedly mentioned. It may be more ſatisfac-

 tory

that the writers were of this lower claſs, and that their aſſociates were frequently of the ſame deſcription; but the character of the ſtyle is the ſtrongeſt confirmation poſſible, that their conditions were not higher, than what they have aſcribed to themſelves.

WHAT is the inference from theſe facts? That the books of the New Teſtament were written exactly at the time, in which they are ſuppoſed to have been written, and by the very perſons, to whom they are aſcribed? By no means. No internal marks perhaps could ſupply a proof of ſuch accuracy as this. But they ſhew that they were written near the time, to which they were attributed; and by perſons ſimilarly ſituated in religion, language, and condition, to thoſe, whoſe works they are aſſerted to be. So that the internal marks, thoſe characters which cannot be feigned, are ſo far from contradicting the pretenſions of the writers, that they even ſupply a powerful argument in their favour. "It cannot be concluded (ſays Michaelis very

tory to refer to Acts iii. 6. xviii. 3. xx. 34. 2 Cor. ch. viii. and ix. xi. 6, 8, 9, 27. xii 14, &c. Phil. ii. 25. iv. 10, &c. 1 Theſſ. ii. 6, 9. 2 Theſſ. iii. 8, 10, 11. Philem. 11, 18. In theſe, the attainments, occupations and aſſociates of the firſt preachers of the Goſpel are indirectly mentioned and alluded to, and afford a ſpecies of *undeſigned* proof, which ſeems to repel the imputation of fraud, eſpecially if the circumſtance of ſtyle be taken into the account.

very juſtly) from theſe premiſes alone, that the ſacred books of the New Teſtament were written by thoſe particular perſons to whom they are aſcribed, but only that they were compoſed either by native Jews, or by perſons, who, by continual intercourſe with that nation, had inſenſibly adopted the Jewiſh ſtyle. It follows therefore, from what has been ſaid above, that they were written before the year 120, a concluſion ſufficient to anſwer our preſent purpoſe, when applied to the books of undoubted authority *."

SECONDLY, The remarkable minuteneſs and preciſion, with which the incidents and converſations are recorded in the hiſtorical books, ſuit the character, and juſtify the pretenſions, of the authors, as having been eye-witneſſes, or as having derived their information from eye-witneſſes. Not only are the time and place of many tranſactions deſcribed with uncommon exactneſs †, but the

* "τὰ ὁμολογούμενα." p. 47.

† John vi. 10. "Now there was much graſs in the place." Surely that is the obſervation of an eye-witneſs.—Mark ix. 3. The deſcription of the transfiguration is ſo ſtriking, that it increaſes the probability of Mark's Goſpel being written under the direction of St. Peter.—Obſerve the incident in c. xiv. 51, 52. Who was this νεανίσκος? could it be Mark himſelf? I beg alſo to refer the reader to the following paſſages, which appear to me to bear evident marks of being written by perſons well acquainted with the facts, which they

the names of individuals * are particularly mentioned; and this too, when the writers do not affect preciſion, as to the order of occurrences, but profeſſedly relate events, as they ſuggeſted themſelves to the memory, or appeared to be more peculiarly worth recording.

It is the practice of impoſtors, with the pretence of accuracy, to avoid entering into particulars, and to carry away their readers by enlarging upon general topics: thoſe, who write with the minuteneſs of the ſacred hiſtorians, can do it only in the conviction, that they are deſcribing real incidents.— From this it follows, that the tranſactions, muſt have occurred ſomewhere about the time

they have undertaken to record. Mark v. 25. viii. 14. x. 50. xiv. 5. Luke viii. 42, 51. ix. 28. xix. 3, 4. xxii. 59. xxiv. 42. John vi. 22, 23. xviii. 26. xix. 39. xx. 3, 7. xxi. 11, &c. The enumeration of circumſtances ſo minute with reſpect to time, age, place, quantity, geſture, &c. carries along with it a ſort of calm, but ſatisfactory evidence, in which the mind acquieſces more readily, in proportion as it examines more attentively. To the foregoing paſſages add Mark xiv. 54. and the parallel places, Luke xxii. 55. John xviii. 18. The intenſeneſs of the cold during the *night* in Judæa, about the time of the vernal equinox, is ſufficiently proved by the concurring evidence of travellers. See Shaw's Travels, folio, pp. 362. 377. 379. Maundrell complains of the ſeverity of the dews in the night of March 22. See his Journey, p. 57. 6th Edit. The crucifixion, according to Ferguſon, took place April 3rd in the laſt year of the 202d Olympiad. See his Aſtronomy, 4to. p. 194.

* Mark v. 22. x. 46. xv. 21, 40, 43. Luke xxiii. 26. John xviii. 10. Acts ix. 36. x. 1, 32. xiii. 1, 6, 7.

time they are related to have happened, and the hiſtories muſt alſo have been written not long after: ſince Jeruſalem was deſtroyed, the inhabitants ſlain or carried away, and the whole country made deſolate, about 40 years after the death of Jeſus: and as no opportunity was afterwards afforded for obſerving any thing ſimilar, ſo no temptation could be preſented for laying the ſcene of ſuch incidents in that country.

THIRDLY, Theſe writings are not infected with the ſlighteſt tincture of party ſpirit. If the authors had been prompted to compoſe and publiſh theſe hiſtories with any ſiniſter intention, their object would have been to exalt the character of Jeſus and his followers, and to degrade and vilify their adverſaries. Splendid eulogia upon the one, and pointed cenſures of the other, would have been ſtudiouſly introduced. Inſtead of which, not the ſlighteſt attempt at panegyric, nor the leaſt degree of miſrepreſentation is obſervable. A plain tale is told artleſsly and abruptly. The character of Jeſus is rendered prominent by a ſimple detail of his actions; and the proceedings of his enemies are ſet forth in the uſual manner of hiſtorical narrative, without offenſive imputations

imputations or epithets, or any attempt * to prepoſſeſs the reader againſt them. Objections to the doctrine † and conduct of Chriſt are accurately ſtated: and the only ſolicitude of the writers, if any be manifeſt, is to tell conciſely, but faithfully, ſome intereſting paſſages in his life and hiſtory.

FOURTHLY, The utmoſt candour and honeſty are obſervable in recording their own errors and failings. They expoſe, without ſcruple, the bigotry ‡, the incapacity, the cowardice, the diſingenuouſneſs, the inconſiſtency of the diſciples, that is, of themſelves and their partizans. The doubts § they entertained concerning the conduct and pretenſions of their Maſter, their jealouſy of each other, the ambition of James and John, the

* A ſtriking inſtance of the candour of the Evangeliſts is given by Michaelis, p. 64. Every impartial reader cannot fail to remark the pains they have taken to do juſtice to the attempts made by Pilate, in order to ſave the life of Jeſus. See Dr. White's Diateſſaron, pp. 275—282.

† Matth. ix. 3, 34. xi. 3. xii. 2, 24. xiii. 54, &c. xxvii. 42, 63. xxviii. 13. Mark iii. 21, 22. Luke vii. 34, 39. xi, 38. xix. 7. John vii. 5, 12, 15, 20. x. 20.

‡ This ſubject, which is connected with what immediately follows, will be opened more fully in the third chapter. I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with referring to diſtinct paſſages in proof of each aſſertion, and in the order in which they here ſtand. Vide Luke ix. 54. Acts iv. 13. Mark xiv. 50. Galatians ii. 11. Mark viii. 14—21.

§ For proofs of theſe aſſertions, ſee Matth. xvii. 20. Luke ix. 46. Matth. xx. 20. Luke xxii. 61. and Galatians, ubi ſupra. John xx. 25. Acts xv. 39.

the apoſtacy and diſſimulation of Peter, the incredulity of Thomas, the diſpute between Paul and Barnabas, are recorded with an air of impartiality and integrity, which baffles ſuſpicion, and invites the ſtricteſt confidence.

FIFTHLY, The hiſtory that is contained in the Goſpels, and in the Acts, extraordinary as it is, and exhibiting the different, and even oppoſite, conduct of the ſame men at different times, is perfectly conſiſtent in all it's parts, if we admit the baſis upon which that hiſtory reſts. But if we diſcredit the miraculous part of the hiſtory, it will be equally impoſſible, to aſſign a reaſon why ſuch a ſtory ſhould have been ſo invented; and to reconcile with any known principles of human action the conduct of the agents. The miracles* are ſo connected with the narrative, that if we reject the belief of them, it will be extremely difficult to find arguments of ſufficient force to convince us that Jeſus claimed the title of the Meſſiah, and

* An obſervation of ſimilar import, made by Lord Bolingbroke with reſpect to the Old Teſtament, is applied to an excellent purpoſe by the Biſhop of Lincoln, in his Elements of Chriſtian Theology, Vol. I. p. 50.

and that any were found among the Jews to admit his pretenſions.

SIXTHLY, Another mark of truth diſcernible in the writings of the ſacred hiſtorians, is the exact preſervation of character; whether the marks of identity be traced in the actions and diſcourſes of the ſame individual, in the various occaſions upon which he is introduced; or whether the features of the different actors, as delineated by theſe writers, correſpond with the lineaments of the ſame perſons, as they are preſerved in undoubted ſources of information.

IT has ever been conſidered as a requiſite, in fictitious compoſitions*, that the characters ſhould not only have the diſtinguiſhing marks of the peculiar ſituation, and circumſtances, in which they are ſuppoſed to be placed, but that a conſiſtency ſhould be ſtrictly obſerved throughout the ſame character; and if the perſon thus repreſented, be brought from real life, it is invariably required, that he ſhould bear ſome viſible marks of thoſe qualities, which hiſtory or fame has already aſſigned him. This is abſolutely

* Horat. Art. Poet. vv. 105. 112. 119. 126. 156, &c. See alſo Ariſtot. Rhetor. b. ii. c. 12.

ſolutely neceſſary in order to render fiction probable.—And the nearer the approach is made to theſe previous requiſites, the more is the merit of the writer enhanced, and the intereſt of the compoſition heightened. Now certainly, the qualities that are neceſſary to render a profeſſed fiction probable, are indiſpenſably required to make that, which profeſſes to record real tranſactions authentic. And as a deficiency in thoſe qualifications would detract from the credibility of any narrative, ſo the exact adherence to them, under circumſtances, where it is highly improbable, that the art or invention of the writer could have ſupplied theſe marks of truth, muſt in a great degree, if not deciſively, confirm it's claim to the title of true hiſtory.

It is ſcarcely poſſible to conceive a wider compaſs of ſubject, and conſequently one more unfavourable to the genius of fiction, than what is comprehended in the hiſtorical writings of the New Teſtament. Not only are Jews introduced of various ranks and ages, from the chiefs of the Sanhedrim, the expounders of the law, and the leaders of the ſects, to the humble fiſhermen, the companions of Jeſus, and even to characters ſtill

lower, thoſe whom the contagion of diſeaſe, or the ſcandal of their vices had driven from the comforts of ſocial life; but we alſo hear the diſcourſes, and obſerve the actions, of heathens, widely differing from each other in the qualities of their hearts, in the endowments of the mind, in condition and in occupation.—Nor is the ſcene confined to a ſingle nation or country, but we are tranſported from Jeruſalem to Athens, from the reſidence of thoſe, who cultivated no other knowledge than that of their own law and traditions, to the centre of heathen learning and taſte, and of heathen ſuperſtition too and idolatry. From Athens, and from Corinth, and from Epheſus, the ſeats of every improvement in the arts of civilized life, we are conveyed to the rude and uncivilized barbarians on the the ſhores of Melita*. By ſea and by land we accompany the adventurous voyagers, amidſt ſcenes, in which they appear to the aſtoniſhed ſpectators, as gods deſcended from heaven—or when they ſeem to the deluded multitude, as

* I accede to the opinion of the learned Mr. Bryant, and Ignatius Georgius, that the iſland, on which St. Paul was ſhipwrecked, was Melite Illyrica: though I am aware, that the contrary hypotheſis has been maintained with great ability by Walchius, in his Commentary De Deo Melitenſium, publiſhed at Jena 1753.

as the fanatic enemies of religion—ſtill, in the characters of the chief actors, we obſerve a conſiſtency and identity, which atteſts the reality of the repreſentation; while thoſe, with whom they converſe, and who are introduced but incidentally, bear the traces of that national and individual reſemblance, which the records of hiſtory have invariably aſſigned them.

THE grand exemplification of the preceding remarks, is to be noticed in the character of our Lord himſelf, which is at once ſo peculiar, that it could ſcarcely be copied, yet ſo natural, that it could not be feigned. In the very minute delineation of his actions and ſentiments, we cannot fail to trace one and the ſame dignified, and virtuous, and benevolent Being. In the various, and ſeemingly oppoſite, excellencies which are pourtrayed, of dignity and of humility, of juſt reſentment and of ſubmiſſive patience, of fortitude and meekneſs, not once do we diſcover any marks of inconſiſtency, not one action or one word do we remark, that does not ſeem appropriate to the new and ſublime pretenſions of the Son of God. In thoſe of the diſciples, who come more particularly forward to obſervation, each individual is diſtinguiſhed

diſtinguiſhed by ſome peculiarity of manner, yet that manner is invariably and exactly preſerved. The characters of St. Paul and St. Peter are both marked by a warmth and eagerneſs of diſpoſition, yet they are ſo repreſented, as to appear each poſſeſſed of his own diſcriminating qualities. In both we obſerve indelible traces of a peculiar conformation of temper and of habits, yet the actions of the one are not liable to be miſtaken for thoſe of the other. In St. Paul we ſee an ardent inflexible zeal; knowing no fear, and defying every danger, when purſuing what his conviction pronounced to be truth. In him too we diſcover intellectual powers of a more than ordinary ſize, —fervid, full, and comprehenſive. In St. Peter's conduct plain traces of a ready impetuous zeal are diſcernible; but it is a zeal mixed with a degree of timorous ſelfiſhneſs, and more eaſily bent from it's purpoſe, than that of his fellow-apoſtle. A difference alſo is very obſervable in the caſt of his underſtanding, which is neither ſo quick nor ſo vigorous, as that of St. Paul. As in the former, we diſtinguiſh the ſame individual impelled by ſimilar motives, though placed in very different ſituations; equally bold and im-

impatient, whether perſecuting Chriſtianity, or preaching in it's ſupport; ſo in the Apoſtle, who temporized at Antioch*, we recognize at once an identity with him, who had denied his Maſter.

THESE marks of ſameneſs and of diverſity, are often as diſcernible in the recital of actions, or of diſcourſes, ſeemingly trivial, as in fuller details. Thus the incident recorded by St. Luke, at the end of his tenth chapter, is ſtrikingly characteriſtic of the different tempers of two ſiſters; one of whom was more attentive to the cares and concerns of the world, while the other ſhewed a more laudable anxiety to profit by the leſſons of Jeſus. When we again diſcover Mary† pouring out the precious ointment, as a mark of veneration, and of gratitude to Jeſus, we inſtantly acknowledge the probability of the fact, from a previous acquaintance

* Galat. ii. 11, &c.

† The character of the other ſiſter is incidentally, but accurately, preſerved; for we are told "they made him a ſupper, and Martha ſerved."

See John xii. ad init. compared with Matth. xxvi. and Mark xiv. This circumſtance may ſeem to throw additional light upon the fact of Lazarus' reſurrection. However pious, and however grateful the temper of Mary might be, yet in her humble ſituation, it is not very likely ſhe would uſe ſo expenſive a method of ſhewing her veneration for Jeſus, unleſs ſhe had received ſome ſignal mark of favour and kindneſs from him.

ance with her diſpoſition. The objection which was made by Judas, to the coſtly manner in which her piety was ſhewn, and the reaſons aſſigned for the objection, mark a want of feeling, and a ſpirit of ſelfiſhneſs and hypocriſy, perfectly ſuitable to the nature of a man, who could betray his Maſter in the very act of offering a token of reſpect and attachment.

CONCERNING the obſcure and illiterate preachers of the Goſpel, it is not likely we ſhould meet with any information in writers, totally different in habits and opinions, as well as remote in ſituation: but as to the Roman officers, connected with the tranſactions deſcribed by the Evangeliſts, it was probable ſome clue would be found for judging of their general character; and this, upon examination, is obſerved to coincide with the account of the ſacred writers. So that theſe characters are not only drawn without any violation of that reſemblance, which the ſame perſon in ſome degree invariably preſerves; but they alſo correſpond, ſo far as they can be compared, with the authentic documents of other antient hiſtorians.

WHEN we caſt our eyes upon the conduct of theſe Romans, we inſtantly perceive the

the inſolence and injuſtice, which were too frequently practiſed by the governours of provinces; we ſee alſo evident marks of the alarms, which the conſciences of ſuch men would probably excite, however they might be diſregarded; we remark, moreover, that ignorance and contempt* of Jewiſh manners and cuſtoms, which it was conſiſtent with the feelings and ſentiments of idolaters, inveſted with authority, to manifeſt. If we examine more minutely and diſtinctly the manner in which theſe men acted, a variety of ſtyle and deportment comes to view, which marks them to be different men. Pilate is unjuſt, but timorous, and ſcrupulous of committing an act in itſelf palpably wrong, from which he ſees no probability of advantage to himſelf; nor is his reluctance entirely ſubdued, till he is threatened with the diſpleaſure of Cæſar. The diſcriminating feature of Gallio's† mind s philoſophic

* Thus Pilate, "Am I a Jew?" John xviii. 35. See alſo Acts xxv. 19, 20.

† Acts xviii. 12, &c. From Seneca's account of his brother, after making due allowance for the warmth of his affection, we may learn, I think, that Gallio was an indolent man, of good temper, but of a literary and philoſophic turn, with which St. Luke's account agrees extremely well. See the paſſages quoted by Lardner, Vol. I. p. 167. See alſo the character of Felix as repreſented by Tacitus, ib. p. 27.

philoſophic indifference; and in Felix, the predominant paſſion is made up of curioſity and avarice.

Besides this preſervation of likeneſs in individuals, the exact and uncommon propriety, with which the ſentiments of particular bodies of men, and even national foibles, are characterized, deſerves to be diligently remarked. To mention only one ſtriking inſtance, I would boldly aſk every intelligent reader, who is acquainted with the opinions of Heathen philoſophers, and with the turn and humour of the Athenians, whether he does not acknowledge ſtriking proofs of reality in the following paſſage.

"Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his ſpirit was ſtirred in him, when he ſaw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore diſputed he in the ſynagogue with the Jews, and with the devout perſons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philoſophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And ſome ſaid, What will this babbler ſay? other ſome, He ſeemeth to be a ſetter forth of ſtrange gods: becauſe he preached unto them Jeſus, and the Reſurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus,

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

pagus, ſaying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou ſpeakeſt, is? For thou bringeſt certain ſtrange things to our ears: we would know therefore what theſe things mean. (For all the Athenians and ſtrangers which were there, ſpent their time in nothing elſe, but either to tell or to hear ſome new thing.) Then Paul ſtood in the midſt of Mars' hill, and ſaid, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things, ye are too ſuperſtitious. For as I paſſed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inſcription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*."

Now we learn from the beſt ſources of information, that Athens was, of all the cities in Greece, the moſt remarkable for a blind and ſuperſtitious attachment to the objects of popular worſhip; and that there were actually altars in that city, erected in honour of GODS UNKNOWN. It is certain alſo, that the Athenians were peculiarly jealous in regard to the introduction of new, or ſtrange, gods; and that any offence againſt the

* Acts xvii. 16, &c. See a variety of the moſt unqueſtionable authorities for the truth of all the aſſertions which follow, in Wetſtein's copious notes upon this paſſage. This coincidence will not fail to be more ſtriking to the learned reader, who will ſee many of the ſame terms employed by profane writers, as by St. Luke.

the prevailing religious belief, or ceremonies, came more peculiarly under the cognizance of the Areopagus. The thirſt of this people for information, and their paſſion for novelty, are the ſubject of complaint in their own countrymen, and of wonder in foreigners. It is a no leſs curious coincidence that the forum, or *market*, was the ſcene of their diſputations on philoſophy, and religion, as well as the common reſort of the idlers, who were anxious "to tell, or to hear, ſome new thing." In addition to the marks of authenticity contained in this paſſage, we may further urge the pride and ſuperciliouſneſs, which were diſtinguiſhing features in the character of the antient philoſophers: and with reſpect to thoſe, who are here mentioned, there certainly was no doctrine more completely at variance with the notions, both of the Stoics and the Epicureans, than the reſurrection of the body: ſince the former held that the human ſoul, immediately after death, would be refunded into the univerſal ſoul, and thereby loſe it's individual exiſtence*; while the Epicureans maintained that it periſhed entirely. Conſequently it was

* See Leland on the Advantage and Neceſſity of the Chriſtian Revelation, Vo p.285.

was probable, that no one aſſertion of the inſpired teacher would excite ſo much diſguſt in thoſe proud and bigotted diſputants, as that, which we here find them exploding in terms of the moſt bitter contempt.

FROM the ſtyle and contents of theſe volumes, we have the ſtrongeſt reaſons for concluding, that the authors of them were Jews, in an humble way of life, unacquainted with the arts of compoſition*. Now it ſeems inconceivable, that any writers of this deſcription ſhould gain ſuch an accurate and complete knowledge of human nature, and be ſo thoroughly acquainted with the characters and tranſactions of the times, as to introduce ſo many diſtinguiſhed actors, in a variety of feigned ſituations, and yet betray no ſymptoms of inconſiſtency, nor by any lapſe of memory or judgement, ſhock our belief of the reality of the incidents, or the identity of the characters. The difficulty is greatly increaſed, when we conſider, that it is not a ſingle writer, whoſe veracity is called in queſtion; but that a variety of writers, upon the ſuppoſition of a fraud, muſt have agreed to relate

* Vid. ſup. pag. 10, &c.

late different particulars of the ſame imaginary tranſactions, and to introduce the ſame character in different fictitious ſituations. For, if a ſtory be really untrue, the chance of diſcovering it's fallacy, muſt be increaſed in exact proportion to the minuteneſs of the detail, and the number of perſons who relate it ſeparately. Where ſuch a ſtory is told very circumſtantially, and by a variety of witneſſes, the probability of ſome palpable contradiction is ſo great, that it ſeems ſcarcely poſſible to eſcape detection. Yet ſurely it will be owned by every careful enquirer, that the difference obſervable in the accounts of the ſacred hiſtorians, whether we regard character, or incident, is no other than what might naturally be expected, when writers of different parts and diſpoſitions, give an account of the ſame tranſactions: nor is it ſuch, as would be thought to impeach the credibility of any other hiſtorian, in any other ſubject.

It ſeems therefore plainly impoſſible, that theſe writers ſhould have concurred in inventing the narratives, which appear under their names: it ſeems equally difficult to believe, that they ſhould have been prevailed upon by any other perſon to record that, which

which they adopted only upon the credit of their informer. And certainly theſe narratives, whether examined ſeparately, or compared with each other, preſerve ſo invariably ſuch an uniformity of character in the ſame individual, and throw ſuch vivid colours of diſcrimination into the actions and manners of the various perſonages, whom they undertake to record, that it requires a more than ordinary ſhare of ſceptical prejudice, to reſtrain us from believing that they drew from the life, and deſcribed actions as they ſaw them performed, and recorded diſcourſes as they heard them delivered.

Let it moreover be obſerved, that, in a narrative of various and important tranſactions; part of which may be verified by the production of poſitive collateral evidence, while a part muſt reſt upon the accuſtomed marks of genuineneſs and authenticity; if the writer be found adhering to truth, whenever recourſe can be had to other and ſeparate means of proof, in ſuch a caſe the part which is ſo corroborated, adds force and weight to that which muſt reſt upon the author's credit: ſo that, if we fail in diſcovering any error or deceit, where we can apply the touch-ſtone of independent and unſuſpected

ſuſpected hiſtory, we are bound by the rules of candour, and of juſtice, to ſuppoſe the writer incapable of either miſtake, or fraud; although we cannot directly confront him with competent witneſſes, in all the parts of his narrative *.

SEVENTHLY, The caution †, with which the early Chriſtians inveſtigated the claims of thoſe writings, which aſpired to a place in the ſacred Canon, before they admitted them, ſtamps an indelible mark of truth upon the books, which they pronounced to be genuine and authentic. They not only ſeparated theſe books from ſuch as were palpably ſpurious, but

* As I wiſh to confine myſelf principally to topics, which, as far as my recollection or knowledge extends, have not been dwelt upon by other writers, I have noticed the coincidence between the ſacred and profane hiſtorians, ſo far only as it relates to the *characters* of nations, or individuals. The coincidence in other material points in chronology, and hiſtory, &c. (which is indeed a moſt important branch of internal evidence,) has been moſt fully, and ably diſcuſſed by Lardner; and after him by Dr. Paley, in his truly admirable View of the Evidences of Chriſtianity, part II. chapter 6. What Michaelis has urged on this head, Vol. I. pp. 50—54. is ſingularly worth attention. To thoſe, who are not converſant with theſe ſubjects, I may be permitted to recommend as a ſource of conſiderable entertainment and ſatisfaction, Harmer's Obſervations on divers Paſſages of Scripture, in 4 Vols. 8vo. lately re-publiſhed.

† This argument is not ſtrictly applicable to internal evidence, but as it leads to conſiderations wholly belonging to that branch of proof, I wiſh not to ſuppreſs it. The ixth chapter, part I. of Dr. Paley's Evidences, may be ſtudied with great advantage, particularly ſect. 8. and 11.

but weighed the evidence in their favour with ſuch ſcrupulouſneſs, as to throw into a lower claſs the compoſitions, which afforded room for the ſlighteſt doubt reſpecting their authority. It is well known, that Euſebius * has divided the books really written, or pretended to be written, by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, into three claſſes, in conformity with the opinion of the beſt informed Chriſtians, in the age in which he flouriſhed, and the times preceding it. From him we find that the firſt and higheſt claſs was aſſigned to "books of undoubted authority, and univerſally received in the Church as genuine." In the ſecond claſs were contained ſuch as were "doubtful, but acknowledged by the moſt to be genuine." The third and loweſt claſs conſiſted of ſuch as were manifeſtly ſpurious.

By this accurate diſcrimination, not only were the trifles of ſophiſts, the dreams of enthuſiaſts, and the forgeries of impoſtors, properly ſtigmatized, but the different degrees of evidence, belonging to the more reſpectable compoſitions, were weighed ſo nicely,

* Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib. III. c. 25. Michaelis, c. 2. ſect. 3. with the learned tranſlator's notes.

nicely, that, of the writings which compoſe our preſent canon, though by far the greater part juſtly claimed the diſtinction of the higher claſs, yet ſome few* even of theſe had their ſtation allotted in the ſecond, as in ſome meaſure falling ſhort of that full and ſatisfactory proof, by which alone they could be judged worthy of an undiſputed place in the ſacred code. No profane writings whatſoever, underwent ſuch a trial as this, or had their pretenſions ſcrutinized with ſo much minuteneſs, ſo ſoon after their firſt appearance; ſurely, therefore, we are warranted in affixing the title of genuine to the narratives of the Evangeliſts, and the Epiſtles of St. Paul, with at leaſt the ſame degree of juſtice, with which it is readily allowed to the hiſtories of Thucydides, Xenophon and Cæſar, and to the letters of Cicero and Pliny.

If however we confine ourſelves entirely to internal proof, a more ſatisfactory atteſtation to the genuineneſs and authenticity of the books of the New Teſtament cannot be ſhewn to a reader of taſte and candour, than what is ſupplied by comparing them with

* The Epiſtles of James and Jude, the ſecond of Peter, with the ſecond and third of John.

with thoſe ſpurious compoſitions, which were juſtly placed in the loweſt claſs by the early Chriſtians.

THE beauty of nature is never ſo conſpicuous, as when contraſted with the productions of art; and truth itſelf never ſhines with ſuch unrivalled brilliancy, as when it is placed by the ſide of fiction. Such at leaſt is the reſult of a compariſon between the genuine productions of Chriſtian antiquity, and thoſe counterfeit imitations, which falſe zeal, or deſigning artifice, endeavoured to impoſe upon the world, as equally deſerving of credit. For in the firſt place, an imitation implies the exiſtence of an original. It is ſcarcely poſſible that any ſpurious Goſpels or Epiſtles ſhould have appeared, unleſs there had been extant genuine and authentic compoſitions, with a ſimilar title and character; that is, accounts of the life and conduct of Jeſus Chriſt, drawn up by credible witneſſes, and letters written to the various infant Churches, by perſons inveſted with ſome ſhare of authority over them.

As the long train of pretended miracles, by which the credulity of mankind was aſſailed in ſucceeding ages, naturally leads an

enquiring mind to ſuppoſe, that ſome miraculous acts had really been performed in the time of Jeſus and his Apoſtles, in imitation of which thoſe later wonders were aſſerted to have taken place; ſo the exiſtence of a variety of ſpurious compoſitions, profeſſing to give an account of the life and actions of Jeſus, or to give directions to Chriſtian Churches, under the name and authority of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, affords, of itſelf, a ſtrong ground of belief, that there were in truth books of undoubted credit, realizing the character, to which the fictions of later ages aſpired.

PERHAPS this poſition is univerſally true, and may be conſidered as applicable to the impoſitions of the Heathen oracles, and to the aſſumptions of Heathen Legiſlators, as well as of other pretenders to divine revelations.—If traditions, reſting ultimately upon a baſis of truth, had not exiſted concerning ſome intercourſe of man with Heaven; if the Deity had not really vouchſafed to communicate to ſome of his highly-favoured creatures an inſight into futurity, and had not made a formal promulgation of his will by revelation, the oracles of Dodona and Delphi, the converſe of Numa with Egeria and the Muſes,

Muſes, or the more bold, and more ſucceſſful pretenſions of Mahomet, might not have been heard of. However this may be, yet, in the caſe of the true and Apocryphal Goſpels, it can ſcarcely admit of a doubt, but that the appearance of the counterfeit volumes implies the previous exiſtence of ſuch as *were* in reality, what theſe *pretended* to be.

If we inſpect, even ſuperficially, the contents of theſe Apocryphal* writings, the proof

* Fabricius has made a collection of the Apocryphal writings relating to the Old Teſtament, under the title of Codex Pſeudepigraphus Veteris Teſtamenti, 12mo. pp. 1174. Hamburg. & Lips. 1713. He has alſo, with equal diligence and learning, collected and illuſtrated thoſe, which relate to the New Teſtament. The edition, from which my extracts are made, conſiſts of three parts in 12mo. comprehending about 2000 pp. and was publiſhed at Hamburgh 1719. If any Sopater or Leo (ſee the preface of Fabricius) ſhould reprehend me for employing my time upon ſuch books, I truſt they will not object to an apology in the words of St. Ambroſe,—Legimus aliqua, ne legantur, legimus ne ignoremus, legimus non ut teneamus, ſed ut repudiemus, et ut ſciamus, qualia ſint, in quibus magnifici iſti (ſc. Hæretici) cor exaltant ſuum. Commentar. in S. Luc. proœm.

I had not an opportunity, till very lately, of becoming acquainted with Mr. Jones's work, entitled, "A new and full method of ſettling the canonical authority of the New Teſtament." It was firſt publiſhed in 1726—7. For the re-publication of this, and of other ſcarce and valuable books in Theology, we are indebted to the liberality and zeal of the conductors of the Clarendon Preſs. This writer has brought together, with uncommon diligence and judgement, the external evidence for the authenticity and genuineneſs of the

proof becomes more deciſive in favour of thoſe, which we eſteem canonical. The ſtyle and the manner of the former betray ſo plainly the marks of imitation and the intentions of impoſture, that they ſet off more conſpicuouſly the truth and originality of the latter.

BESIDES the want of external authority, in which the Apocryphal writings are palpably deficient, the reverſe of every poſition, which has been applied to the books of the New Teſtament, might be ſhewn to be true of theſe. To give a variety to the ſubject, and to place the proof of their want of genuineneſs in a clearer light, another arrangement of particulars has been adopted: in conformity with which we may remark, that

the Canonical books, (ſo far as he was enabled to execute his plan) and he has, with equal ability and fairneſs, ſtated his reaſons for deciding againſt the authority of the Apocryphal.—In the proſecution of this important deſign, he has not only quoted, but tranſlated, the greater part of the contents of Fabricius's two firſt volumes: ſo that the Engliſh reader may conſult, through the medium of his tranſlation, the paſſages I have taken occaſion to quote from that collection.

Mr. Jones was chiefly led to conſider the external evidence; yet he has occaſionally ſtated ſome defects of authenticity, which are viſible in the ſtructure and materials of the Apocryphal books themſelves. I might therefore have enlarged this chapter with many obſervations from him; but it remains, as it was originally written. I would however earneſtly adviſe thoſe of my readers, who may not yet be maſters of the ſubject, to ſtudy very carefully this valuable work.

that the following, amongſt other qualities, ſtrikingly characteriſtic of fraud and error, are obſervable in the ſpurious Goſpels and Epiſtles.

I. The appearance of a deſign to ſupport ſome doctrine or practice, or to obviate ſome hereſy, which had their origin ſubſequent to the Apoſtolic age.

II. A detail of impertinent and trifling circumſtances.

III. The introduction of uſeleſs and improbable miracles.

IV. A ſtudied imitation of various paſſages in the genuine ſcriptures, both to conceal the fraud, and to allure readers.

V. A poverty of ſtyle, and barrenneſs of invention, gloſſing over the want of incident by ſophiſtical declamation.

VI. Contradictions to known hiſtorical facts.

VII. An officious intruſion of the pretended authors' names.

VIII. Actions, utterly unworthy the character of a perſonage, divinely commiſſioned to inſtruct and reform mankind, are aſcribed to Jeſus.

I. The

I. THE corrupt doctrines, relative to the Virgin Mary, form an eſſential part in the ſcheme of ſome of theſe deſigners. Thoſe who believed, or affected to believe, that the Virgin was exalted into Heaven, who adopted the notion of her immaculate conception, and her power of working miracles, found but little countenance for their abſurdities in the genuine Goſpels. It was a taſk too hard for them to defend ſuch tenets againſt their adverſaries, while the canonical books were the only authority they could appeal to. Hence a Goſpel was written *de Nativitate Mariæ*, in which her birth is foretold by Angels, and herſelf repreſented as always under the peculiar protection of Heaven. Hence in the Goſpel, attributed to James, which aſſumed the name of Protevangelium, as claiming the ſuperiority over every other, whether canonical or apocryphal, the fact of the immaculate conception is ſupported by ſuch a miracle, as to leave no doubt upon the moſt incredulous mind. Hence too in the *Evangelium Infantiæ*, the Virgin, who is ſimply ſaid by St. Matthew to have gone into Egypt, is repreſented as making her progreſs more like a divinity, than

than a mortal, performing, by the aſſiſtance of her infant Son, a variety of miracles, ſuch as might entitle her, in the minds of the blind and bigotted, to divine honours. To ſhew the extent to which theſe forgeries have been carried, and at the ſame time to exhibit a remarkable contraſt between the doctrine and the ſtyle of the genuine Epiſtles, and ſuch as are ſurreptitious, it will be worth while to quote two letters, pretended to be written by the Virgin Mary to the inhabitants of Meſſana and Florence, with a view to ſupport her honour, and flatter their vanity.

MARIA Virgo, Joachim filia, humillima Dei ancilla, Chriſti Jeſu crucifixi mater, ex tribu Juda, ſtirpe David, Meſſanenſibus omnibus ſalutem, et Dei Patris omnipotentis benedictionem.

Vos omnes fide magnâ legatos ac nuncios per publicum documentum ad nos miſiſſe conſtat. Filium noſtrum Dei genitum, Deum et hominem eſſe fatemini, et in cœlum poſt ſuam reſurrectionem aſcendiſſe, Pauli Apoſtoli prædicatione mediante, viam veritatis agnoſcentes. Ob quod vos et civitatem veſtram benedicimus, cujus perpetuam pro-

tectricem nos esse volumus—Anno filii nostri XLII. 3. Nonis Julii, lunæ 17, feriâ quintâ, ex Hierosolymis.

MARIA VIRGO*.

Epistola S. MARIÆ *Virginis ad Florentinos.*

FLORENTIA, Deo et Domino Jesu Christo Filio meo et mihi dilecta. Tene fidem, insta Orationibus, roborare patientiâ. His enim sempiternam consequeris salutem apud Deum †.

ANOTHER doctrine, which these spurious writings were intended to establish, was the sanctity of relics. As a striking proof of this, we are told, in the *Evangelium Infantiæ* ‡ that, when the Magi had offered their gifts to the new-born Infant, Domina Maria sumsit unam ex illis tæniis (quibus involutus erat infans) eamque loco benedictionis illis tradidit, quam ipsi tanquam munus præclarissimum ab eâ acceperunt.

As bandages, of a similar nature and efficacy, were preserved in some churches with the

*Fabric. Codex Apocryph. Nov. Testamenti, Tom. II. p. 849.

† Ibid. p. 852. ‡ Cap. vii.

the moſt ſuperſtitious reverence*, the purpoſe, for which the above paſſage, was written, is obvious.

THE various miracles, which we are told in theſe legends, that our Saviour wrought in his infancy, were doubtleſs intended to counteract the abſurd notion of thoſe heretics, who pretended that Jeſus was a mere man till the period of his baptiſm, when the Æon, or ſpirit, Chriſt, entered into him, and enabled him to perform his miracles. Epiphanius, whoſe judgment did not always keep pace with his zeal, has unfortunately given countenance to theſe fictions for this very reaſon†. Καὶ ἔδει τῷ μὲν ὄντι καὶ παιδαρικὰ αὐτὸν ἔχειν, ἵνα μὴ πρόφασις γένηται ταῖς ἄλλαις αἱρέσεσι ταῖς λεγούσαις, ὅτι ἀπὸ τῆ Ἰορδάνε ἦλθε Χριςὸς εἰς αὐτὸν, ὅπερ ἐςὶν ἡ περιςερά.

II. As to the ſecond head, the contraſt is equally ſtriking between the true, and the counterfeit, Goſpels. The goodneſs of God has indeed ſupplied us with abundant materials for faith, and incitements to virtue, in the

* Faſcias Chriſti aiunt Romæ oſtendi ad S. Pauli, et inſignem ex illis particulam in Hiſpania ad S. Salvatoris, ubi et Chriſti cunæ et induſium monſtrari feruntur. Fabric. ad loc. Vid. etiam cap. v. et ibi annotat.

† Hæres. LI. Alog. num. 20. Fabric. p. 130.

the example, and in the leſſons, of our bleſſed Lord, recorded by his followers. We cannot therefore have any juſt reaſons for regret, that the accounts are not more numerous and more circumſtantial.—We may however both obſerve and admire the conciſeneſs, with which ſome deeply intereſting tranſactions are related; and we may feel a pious ſatisfaction in the aſſurance, that the actions and diſcourſes of Jeſus, were of ſuch a nature, as to occaſion a redundance of matter for the labours of the ſacred penmen, and not only to authorize, but even to require, the omiſſion of a variety of important facts*, But

* "And there are alſo many other things which Jeſus did, the which, if they ſhould be written every one, I ſuppoſe that even the world itſelf could not contain the books that ſhould be written." John xxi. 25.—The hyperbole, here employed by the Evangeliſt, has been objected to as exceeding all proper bounds. If however it be conſidered, as it ſurely ought to be, with reference to the ſubject of this comprehenſive encomium, and to the high-flown expreſſions in uſe amongſt the writer's countrymen, the objection will fall to the ground. I beg leave to contraſt ſome inſtances of a ſimilar turn of thought, in the chaſte and poliſhed compoſitions of Greece and Rome, with the extravagant ideas of ſome Jewiſh Rabbies, and I think that the paſſage in queſtion will appear to preſerve a juſt and natural medium between them. Iſocrates, after enumerating the virtues of Hipponicus, ſays, ἐπιλίποι δ' ἂν ἡμᾶς ὁ πᾶς χρόνος, εἰ πάσας τὰς ἰκείνου πράξεις καταριθμησαίμεθα. Ad Demonicum in init. Cicero, arguing in praiſe of Pompey, exclaims, "Hujus autem orationis difficilius eſt exitum, quàm principium, invenire. Itaque non mihi tàm copia, quàm modus in dicendo quærendus eſt." Pro Leg. Manil.

"He

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

But the materials of the Pſeud-Evangeliſts were too ſcanty to render the taſk of ſelection neceſſary; and the reſult of their labours is very little adapted to produce ſimilar ſatiſfaction, or to excite ſimilar reflections in the minds of their readers. The unimportant and frivolous details, with which their pages are filled, are a plain proof, that they were not poſſeſſed of any real and original information upon the ſubject, which they undertake to elucidate; and clearly invalidate their pretenſions, as eye-witneſſes of the tranſactions, which attended the introduction of the new religion. Thus, in the Goſpel aſcribed to St. James, we are preſented with a dull and ſilly dialogue between the mother of Mary and her waiting-maid *, and with another dialogue †, equally impertinent, between the parents of Mary. We have alſo, in the ſame performance ‡, a grave conſultation of prieſts about the making a veil for the temple; and, not to enlarge upon a matter

"He was ſucceeded by Jochanan, not in right of deſcent, but of his extraordinary merit, which the Rabbies, according to cuſtom, have raiſed to ſo ſurprizing a height, that, according to them, if the whole heavens were paper, all the trees in the world pens, and all the men writers, they would not ſuffice to pen down all his leſſons." Mod. Univ. Hiſt. Vol. X. p. 430. note.

* Protevang. Jacobi c. 2. † Ibid. c. 7. ‡ c. 10.

matter ſo obvious, the following paſſage* occurs in a tedious deſcription of Joſeph's journey to Bethlehem. Καὶ ἐϛράφη Ἰωσὴφ, καὶ εἶδε τὴν Μαρίαν ϛυγνὴν καὶ εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ Ἰωσὴφ, ἴσως τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ χειμάζει αὐτήν. Καὶ πάλιν ἐϛράφη Ἰωσὴφ, καὶ εἶδεν αὐτὴν γελῶσαν, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· Μαρία, τί ἐϛιν, ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπόν σου βλέπω ποτὲ μὲν ϛυγνὸν, ποτὲ δὲ γελῶν καὶ ἀγαλλιώμενον; καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὸν Μαρία· δύο λαοὺς βλέπω τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς μου, ἕνα κλαίοντα καὶ κοπτόμενον, καὶ ἕνα γελῶντα καὶ ἀγαλλιώμενον.

III. It will readily be allowed, that all miracles, aſcribed to the mother of Jeſus, or to himſelf in his infancy, may be called uſeleſs and improbable. A conſiſtent Chriſtian cannot admit the extraordinary interference of the divinity, except for the high and important purpoſe of eſtabliſhing the authority of ſome perſon, commiſſioned to declare his will to mankind. The manner and circumſtance of the interference muſt be marked with a dignity, and ſolemnity, befitting the more immediate preſence of the Almighty. When therefore we obſerve any miraculous acts attributed to perſons, not exerciſing ſuch a commiſſion, performed upon frivolous or improper occaſions, or marked

* Protevangel. Jacob. Cap. 17.

marked by any circumſtance of levity or inanity, we conclude that the report of ſuch miracles is unworthy our attention *, and that the reporters of them are to be ſuſpected of groſs error, or intentional deceit. Thus we ſmile with contempt at the prodigies of a writer, who gravely relates as a ſtupendous miracle, that a child at the age of three years, aſcended without aſſiſtance the ſteps of the temple at Jeruſalem, which were half a cubit each in height †. In the ſame Goſpel ‡, in ſuppoſed accommodation to a prophecy of Iſaiah, which is moſt groſsly miſinterpreted, a declaration from Heaven is alleged to have taken place in favour of Joſeph, the reputed father of Jeſus, ſimilar to that, which, upon the ſtrongeſt grounds, we believe to have been made in honour of Jeſus at his baptiſm. The bandage, which was before mentioned, as having been preſented by Mary to the magi, is of courſe repreſented as the inſtrument of a miracle, being caſt into a fire, yet not conſumed §.

In

* Theſe deſerve to be claſſed with the fictions, of which Ovid ſpeaks:

Prodigioſa loquor veterum miracula vatum:
Nec tulit hæc, nec fert, nec feret ulla dies.

Compare Amor. iii. 6, 17. with Triſt. iii. 8, 12.

† Vid. Evangel. de Nativit. Mariæ, c. 6.

‡ Ibid. c. 8. § Evangel. Infant. c. 8.

In another of these ingenious productions, when Elisabeth wished to shelter her infant Son from the persecution of Herod, she is said to have been thus wonderfully preserved. Ἡ δὲ Ελισάβετ ἀκούσασα, ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς αὐτῆς μέλλει ζητεῖσθαι, λαβοῦσα αὐτὸν ἀνέβη εἰς τὴν ὀρεινὴν, καὶ περιεβλέπετο τόπον, ἐν ᾧ ἀποκρύψει αὐτόν. καὶ οὐκ ἦν τόπος ἀπόκρυφος. Καὶ στενάζουσα λέγει, ὄρος τοῦ Θεοῦ δέξαι μητέρα μετὰ τέκνου. οὐ γὰρ ἠδύνατο ἡ Ελισάβετ προσαναβῆναι. Καὶ παραχρῆμα ἐδιχάσθη τὸ ὄρος ἐκεῖνο, καὶ ἦν διαφαίνων αὐτοῖς ἄγγελος κυρίου, καὶ διαφυλάττων αὐτούς*. Not to mention the variety of miraculous acts in Egypt by Mary and her Son, the palpable absurdity of these forgers cannot be placed in a stronger light, than by remarking, that the powers attributed to Jesus in his early years, are applied to facilitate the operations of Joseph in his trade †.

IV. The striking contrast between truth and falsehood, is naturally heightened, when those passages come under consideration, which are borrowed from the genuine Scriptures, and, with more or less deviation from the original, adapted to the purposes of the Apocryphal writers. The simple fact, which is

* Protevangel. Jacob. c. 22.
† Evangel. Infant. c. 38—39.

is contained in the 19th verſe of the 1ſt chapter of St. Matthew, is expanded through a chapter and an half in the Protevangelium Jacobi*. Again, the plain narrative of St. Luke, c. ii. 16. is not thought ſufficient for the great event which was juſt before related, and accordingly it is thus improved in the Evangelium Infantiæ. Deinde cùm adveniſſent Paſtores, et ſuccenſo igne, admodùm lætarentur, apparuerunt illis exercitus cœleſtes laudantes et celebrantes Deum ſupremum, idémque facientibus paſtoribus, ſpelunca iſta tunc temporis auguſto templo ſimillima videbatur, quoniàm ora cœleſtia, pariter, et terreſtria celebrabant et magnificabant Deum ob nativitatem Domini Chriſti. Videns verò Anus illa Hebræa manifeſta illa miracula, gratias Deo agebat, dicens: Gratias tibi ago, O Deus, Deus Iſraëlis, propterea quòd viderunt oculi mei nativitatem ſervatoris mundi†. The ſhort and intereſting account, which is given by the genuine Evangeliſt at the end of the ſame chapter, is conſidered by the author of a ſpurious Goſpel, as by no means adequate to

* Capp. 13, 14.

† Evang. Infant. c. 4. The latter part is plainly an imitation of Luke, c. ii. 30.

to the great dignity of our Saviour's character, nor calculated to ſatisfy the juſt curioſity of pious Chriſtians. We are therefore informed, that Jeſus, in his conference with the doctors in the temple, after explaining the books of the law, and unfolding the myſteries contained in the Prophetical writings, exhibited a knowledge no leſs profound of aſtronomy, medicine and natural hiſtory *. Hence too in the Goſpel attributed to Nicodemus, the particulars of our Saviour's trial, are enumerated moſt fully, the

* Evang. Infant. capp. 50, &c. This latter part is ſo curious, and forms ſuch a contraſt to the manner of the ſacred hiſtorians, and indeed of all ſerious hiſtory, that I cannot reſiſt the temptation of tranſcribing it. Cúmque adeſſet ibidem philoſophus, aſtronomiæ peritus, rogarétque Dominum Jeſum, num aſtronomiæ ſtuduiſſet? reſpondebat ipſi Dominus Jeſus, exponebátque numerum ſphærarum, et corporum cœleſtium: eorúmque naturas et operationes, oppoſitionem, aſpectum triquetrum, quadratum et ſextilem: progreſſionem eorundem et retrogradationem, computum denique et prognoſticationem, aliáque quæ nullius unquam hominis ratio perveſtigavit. Aderat quoque inter illos philoſophus, medicinæ et naturalis ſcientiæ peritiſſimus; qui cum rogâſſet Dominum Jeſum, an medicinæ ſtuduiſſet? reſpondens ille expoſuit ipſi phyſica et metaphyſica, hyperphyſica et hypophyſica; virtutes quoque corporis et humores, eorundémque effectus; numerum item membrorum et oſſium, venarum, arteriarum et nervorum, temperamenta etiam, calidum et ſiccum, frigidum et humidum, quæque ex hiſce orientur: quænam eſſet operatio animæ in corpus, ejúſque ſenſationes et virtutes; facultates loquendi, iraſcendi, appetendi: denique congregationem et diſſipationem: aliáque quæ nullius creaturæ intellectus unquam penetravit. Tunc ſurgebat philoſophus iſte, et Dominum Jeſum adorabat, et, O Domine Jeſu, inquit, ab hoc tempore ero diſcipulus tuus et ſervus.

the teſtimony of the witneſſes both for, and againſt, him is given at large, and the expoſtulations of Pilate with the Jews are recorded, with a minuteneſs equal to their imagined importance. And as, in the genuine hiſtory of theſe tranſactions, the Roman governour is reported to have put a queſtion of conſiderable moment, to which our Saviour vouchſafed no anſwer, or the Evangeliſts have failed to record it, theſe falſifiers have thought proper to ſupply ſo eſſential a defect. Dicit ei Pilatus, quid eſt veritas? Dicit Jeſus, Veritas de cœlo eſt. Dicit Pilatus: In terris ergo veritas non eſt? Dicit Jeſus Pilato: Intende veritatem eſſe in terrâ inter illos, qui, dum poteſtatem habent judicandi, veritate utuntur, et judicia rectè faciunt*.

V. The genuine writings of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts are certainly not to be valued for thoſe graces, with which a knowledge of the rules of compoſition, and a careful ſtudy of the beſt models, will enable a writer of taſte and diligence to adorn his labours.—They are not to be praiſed for the ſtructure of the ſentences, the flow of the periods,

* Evang. Nicod. c. 3.

periods, or the choice of the expreſſions. But there is a bold negligence, an artleſs ſimplicity in the ſacred volumes, which to a lover of truth and nature, are more intereſting than the moſt laboured effects of art. It is apparent, that they wiſh to repreſent facts, as they really occurred, and diſcourſes, as they were really delivered: and though we frequently pauſe in admiration of the ſimple touches of nature, and the lively repreſentation of incidents, yet theſe are embelliſhments, which ariſe from the nature of the ſubject, or the honeſt warmth of the writer. There is no effort at ornament, under which they appear to ſink, no aim at beauties, which they ſeem unable to attain. The expreſſion is never at variance with the ſubject. Bent upon relating facts, which no deſcription could fully reach, they leave the reader ſatisfied, that the moſt ſimple deſcription is likewiſe the moſt proper.

FAR different are the impreſſions made upon a reader's mind, by the ſpurious productions, the ſpawn of artifice and errour.—Sometimes ſinking into a poverty of ſtyle, and ſometimes ſoaring to a bombaſt elevation, they are at times equally above, and below, that happy mediocrity, which is cha-

racteriſtic

racteriſtic of the Apoſtolical hiſtories. It is ſcarcely poſſible to open a page in the Goſpel of Nicodemus, without diſcovering a tenuity of ſtyle and manner, utterly unworthy any important narrative. Take a ſample from that maſs of abſurdities, which profeſſes to relate our Saviour's tranſactions in Hades. Dominus autem tenens manum Adæ, tradidit Michaeli Archangelo, et omnes ſancti ſequebantur Michaelem Archangelum, et introduxit in Paradiſo gratiâ gloriosâ, et occurrerunt eis obviàm duo viri vetuſti dierum. Interrogati autem à ſanctis: Qui eſtis vos, qui nobiſcum apud inferos nondum fuiſtis, et in Paradiſo corpore collocati eſtis? Reſpondens unus ex eis dixit: Ego ſum Enoch, qui verbo tranſlatus ſum. Hic iſte, qui mecum eſt, Elias Theſbites eſt, qui curru igneo aſſumptus eſt. Hìc et uſque nunc non guſtavimus mortem, ſed in adventum Chriſti reverſuri ſumus divinis ſignis et prodigiis præcincti ad præliandum cum eo, et ab eo occidi in Jeruſalem. Et poſt triduum et dimidium dierum iterùm vivi in nubibus aſſumendi*.

An inſtance of the attempts at elevation of ſtyle, may be obſerved in the deſcription of

* Ev. Nic. c. 25.

of the prodigies, which are ſuppoſed to have taken place at the birth of our Saviour. Καὶ ἐγὼ Ἰωσὴφ περιπατῶν ἀνέβλεψα εἰς τὸν ἀέρα, καὶ εἶδον τὸν ἀέρα ἔκθαμβον, καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἠρεμοῦντα. Καὶ ἐπέβλεψα ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, καὶ εἶδον σκάφην κειμένην, καὶ ἐργάτας ἀνακειμένους, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν ἦσαν ἐπὶ τὴν σκάφην. Καὶ οἱ μασσόμενοι οὐκ ἐμάσσοντο· καὶ οἱ αἴροντες ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, οὐκ ἀνέφερον· καὶ οἱ προσφέροντες, τὸ στόμα τι οὐ προσέφερον· ἀλλὰ πάντων ἦν τὰ πρόσωπα ἄνω βλέποντα. Καὶ εἶδον πρόβατα ἐλαυνόμενα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα ἐστήκεισαν. Καὶ ἦρεν ὁ ποιμὴν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ, πατάξαι αὐτά, καὶ ἡ χεὶρ αὐτοῦ ἔστη ἄνω. καὶ ἔβλεψα εἰς τὸν χειμάῤῥουν ποταμὸν, καὶ εἶδον τοὺς ἐρίφους καὶ τὰ στόματα αὐτῶν ἐπικείμενα τῷ ὕδατι, καὶ μὴ πίνοντα*.

Barrenness of invention is conſpicuouſly marked in the productions of theſe Sophiſts, ſince with the greateſt latitude of fiction, and the moſt flagrant violation of truth, they are perpetually borrowing incidents from other ſources; from the pure ſtream of ſacred truth, as well as the polluted current of heathen fiction. Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam. c. i.) are the prototypes of Joachim and Anna, in the Protevangelium,

* Protevangel. Jacob. c. 18.

vangelium, which paſſes under the name of St. James; and the circumſtances, which really attended the birth of Samuel, are, with many abſurd and improbable additions, transferred to the nativity of Mary. In the ſame Goſpel, and in that which derives it's name from the birth of Mary (both of which are evidently written with a deſign to raiſe her character) the deſcent of the Holy Spirit is combined with the budding of Aaron's rod, in order to furniſh out a miracle of ſufficient magnitude, to do honour to the Virgin's nuptials*. The ſcene of the incident (Protevangel. c. 11.) is probably borrowed from ſome profane author; and a ſtill more ſtriking reſemblance is diſcoverable between a pretended miracle of Chriſt, and the alleged effects of witchcraft, in a ſtory of Apuleius†. Indeed the implicit credit which

* Compare Numbers xvii. 8. and Matt. iii. 16. with the Evangel. de Nat. Mar. capp. 7. and 8. and with the Protevangel. capp. 8. and 9.

† Quodam etiam die, (ſays the author of the Evangel. Infant. c. 44.) cùm Dominus Jeſus verſaretur inter pueros, qui in tecto ludebant, quidam puerorum ex alto decidens confeſtim expiravit. Diffugientibus verò cæteris pueris, Dominus Jeſus ſolus in tecto remanſit, cúmque adveniſſent propinqui iſtius pueri, dicebant Domino Jeſu: Tu filium noſtrum ex tecto præcipitem dediſti. Illo autem id negante, vociferabantur dicentes: Filius noſter mortuus eſt, et hic eſt, qui illum interfecit. Quibus Dominus Jeſus, Ne me, inquit, arguite facinoris, cujus neutiquam me convincere poteritis, ſed agite,

which is given to the operations of witchcraft, and it's frequent introduction into theſe narratives, enable us to form a very accurate judgement of the eſteem, in which they ought to be held; and the reſult of a compariſon in this point, between them and the canonical books, cannot fail to be deciſive as to the genuine merit of the latter.

In the paſſages which have been already adduced, the hand of a Sophiſt has been ſufficiently evident; and the trick of concealing the want of original and authentic materials under a load of declamation, is too obvious

agite, rogemus puerum ipſum, qui veritatem in lucem producat. Tunc deſcendens Dominus Jeſus ſtetit ſuper capite mortui, et voce magnâ, Zeinune, inquit, Zeinune, quis te de tecto præcipitavit? tunc reſpondens mortuus, Domine, ait, non tu me dejeciſti, ſed ὁ διάβολος me ex illo deturbavit. Et cùm præcepiſſet Dominus adſtantibus, ut ad verba ejus attenderent; omnes, qui aderant, Deum pro hoc miraculo laudabant.

In like manner, a Magician in Apuleius is repreſented as compelling a dead man to declare the cauſe of his death. Propheta . . . . orientem obverſus, et incrementa ſolis auguſti tacitus imprecatus, venerabilis ſcenæ facie ſtudia præſentium ad miraculum tantum certatim adrexit. . . . . Jam tumore pectus extolli: jam ſalubris vena pulſari: jam ſpiritu corpus impleri: et adſurgit cadaver, et profatur adoleſcens: Quid, oro, me poſt Lethæa pocula, jam Stygiis paludibus innatantem, ad momentariæ vitæ reducitis officia? Deſine jam, precor, deſine ac me in meam quietem permitte. Hæc audita vox de corpore. Sed aliquantò Propheta commotior, Quin refers, ait, populo ſingula, tuæque mortis illuminas arcana? . . . . . Suſcipit ille de lectulo, et uno congeſtu populum ſic adorat: Malis novæ nuptæ peremptus artibus, et addictus noxio poculo, torum repentè adultero mancipavi, &c. Metamorphos. Lib. 2.

obvious to have eſcaped the notice, or eluded the practice, of theſe impoſtors. The ſpeech of the Angel to Joachim (Ev. de Nat. Mar. c. 3.) is a glaring caſe in point; but as the enumeration of faults and blemiſhes is no pleaſing taſk, I ſhall content myſelf with citing a ſingle paſſage, which the reader may contraſt with the impreſſive brevity, and intereſting ſimplicity, of the ſacred hiſtorians. Καὶ ἠτένισεν εἰς τὸν ἐρανὸν, καὶ εἶδε καλίαν ρρεθίων ἐν τῇ δάφνῃ, καὶ ἐποίησε θρῆνον ἐν ἑαυτῇ λέγεσα. Οἴ μοι τίς με ἐγέννησε, ποῖα δὲ μήτρα ἐξέφυσέ με, ὅτι ἐγὼ κατάρα ἐγεννήθην ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ισραήλ; καὶ ὠνείδισαν καὶ ἐξεμυκτήρισάν με ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῦ θεῦ με. Οἴ μοι τίνι ὡμοιώθην; ἐχ ὡμοιώθην ἐγὼ τοῖς θηρίοις τῆς γῆς, ὅτι αὐτὰ τὰ θηρία τῆς γῆς γόνιμά εσι ἐνώπιόν σε, Κύριε. Οἴ μοι τίνι ὡμοιώθην ἐγώ; ἐχ ὡμοιώθην ἐγω τοῖς ὕδασι τύτοις, ὅτι αὐτὰ τὰ ὕδατα γόνιμά εἰσιν ἐνώπιόν σε, Κύριε. οἴ μοι τίνι ὡμοιώθην ἐγω; ἐχ ὡμοιώθην ἐγὼ τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ, ὅτι καὶ ἡ γῆ προσφέρει τὰς καρπὰς αὐτῆς, καὶ εὐλογεῖ σε, Κύριε*.

VI. HOWEVER ſtrong the argument from other ſources of compariſon may appear, and

* Protevangel. Jacob. c. 3. A paſſage in the following chapter is plainly characteriſtic of a Sophiſt's workmanſhip. Ἰδὺ γὰς ἡ χήρα, ἐκέτι χήρα· καὶ ἄτεκνος, ἐν γαςὶ λήψομαι.

and however great the probability may be from other cauſes in favour of our poſition, yet there are ſome criteria of truth, which neither dulneſs of apprehenſion, nor obſtinacy of opinion, can elude. In a queſtion, of this ſort, there are ſome marks too deciſive to ſuffer any heſitation, and to which, perhaps, the laſt appeal muſt be made. I allude to thoſe chronological and hiſtorical errours, into which all impoſtors, in ſpite of their precautions, will at ſome time or other fall; and which, when the caſe is clearly made out, will defy every attempt at vindication. In addition to the other proofs which have been brought forward, with a view to aſcertain, by minute compariſon, the undoubted ſuperiority of the canonical writings over the coinage of later times, this important ſpecies of evidence muſt not be forgotten. When therefore we obſerve the errours into which theſe imitators have fallen, and conſider how accurate and complete the accounts of the genuine writers have been proved—writers who certainly had not, humanly ſpeaking, more, if ſo many, advantages, as theſe ſervile and fraudulent copiers —the reſult in favour of truth is equally ſtrong and ſatisfactory. Thus in the Goſ-

pel

pel de Nativ. Mariæ, Iſaſchar is ſaid to have been the high prieſt; but in the production of the Pſeud-Evangeliſt James, Reuben is ſaid to have been in poſſeſſion of that office. Not to inſiſt upon the evident contradiction between the impoſtors themſelves, it is certain that the prieſthood could not at that time have been in poſſeſſion of either* of theſe pretended perſonages. Thus too a king of Jeruſalem† is mentioned at a period, when it is certain no king reigned there, but the ſupreme power was veſted in the hands of a Roman governour. In another of theſe elaborate hiſtories, Mary is ſaid to have made a vow of perpetual celibacy; and a liturgy, aſcribed to St. James, includes a particular ſupplication for the pious inhabitants of monaſteries‡. Thus, in order at once to ſolve the difficulty concerning the age of Zacharias,

* Apud Joſephum, et alios fide dignos ſcriptores, de utroque ne γρ. Fabric. Rudem fuiſſe et indoctum non ſola arguit dictio, ſed etiam quod Pontificem facit Iſaſcharem, qualis tum eſſe non potuit, ut ex ſerie eorum liquet apud Joſephum, Antiquit. Lib. xv. xvi. xvii. et Lib. 1. de bello Judaico ac cæteris. Gerh. Joh. Voſſius Libro de Geneal. Chriſti, p. 34.

† Evangel. Infant. c. 39.

‡ Vid. Abraham. Scultet. apud Fabric. p. 58.

Zacharias*, who is mentioned by our Saviour, as having been ſlain between the temple and the altar, they accommodate a rabbinical tale, to the narrative of a murder, which never happened. To mention only one other inſtance of groſs inaccuracy; in a letter ſuppoſed to be written by the Virgin Mary, ſhe is made to date it in the year of her ſon 42, although the practice of computing from the birth of Jeſus Chriſt, had not it's origin, until five centuries after his death †.

VII. A

* Compare Matth. xxiii. 35. and the annotations of Wetſtein, with c. 23 of Protevangel. Jacob. and the learned comment of Fabricius. Some Fathers of the Chriſtian Church were deceived by theſe Apocryphal accounts of Zacharias, for which they are properly blamed by St. Jerome.

† "In the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, the Chriſtians had no particular epocha to themſelves, but uſed that of the building of the city, or the years of the Cæſars in common with the Romans; the firſt they did make uſe of, was the Æra of Diocletian, whoſe terrible perſecution made ſuch an impreſſion upon their minds, that the time it happened was long after in remembrance. But it was not till the year 532, that the birth of our Lord became to be an Æra, being introduced by Dionyſius, ſurnamed Exiguus, a learned Monk, born in Scythia, and an intimate friend of Caſſiodorus, who wrote an encomium upon him."

"But his computation was not exact, for in this age it is found to have begun too late; at firſt it was not diſcovered to be above two years too ſhort, but at laſt it is found out to want four years, inſomuch that this year which we write 1713, ought to be 1717." Hearne's Ductor Hiſtoricus, Vol. I. p.

I cannot recommend this Author as a guide, implicitly to be followed, in all his ſtatements. His account of Mahomet, in particular, is very inaccurate.

VII. A FRAUDULENT intention on the part of theſe authors, is betrayed by the manner, in which they introduce the names of the perſons, upon whom they have attempted to father their own ſpurious productions. This circumſtance is the more obſervable, as in the genuine Evangelical hiſtories, there appears not the ſlighteſt ſolicitude on the part of the writers, to hand their names down to poſterity; and the only one*, who introduces himſelf to the reader in his own character, does it in the following artleſs manner. Καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκε, καὶ ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία· κἀκεῖνος οἶδεν, ὅτι ἀληθῆ λέγει, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύσητε †. and once more. Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς, ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων, καὶ γράψας ταῦτα· καὶ οἴδαμεν, ὅτι ἀληθής ἐστιν ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτοῦ ‡. How very different is the unaffected ſimplicity of St. John, from the artificial and forced introduction of the names of St. James and St. Thomas, in the Apocryphal books reſpectively aſcribed to them. Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἰάκωβος ἔγραψα τὴν ἱστορίαν ταύτην ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις

* We may, indeed, add the Proœmium of St. Luke; in which however, his name is not mentioned. Ἔδοξε κἀμοὶ—"it ſeemed good to me alſo"—is the unaffected ſtyle of his exordium.

† John, xix. 35.

‡ John xxi. 24.

μοις. Γενομένε δὲ Θορύβε, συνέσειλα ἐγὼ ἐμαυτὸν ἐν τόπῳ ἐρήμῳ, ἕως ἔ ἐτελεύτησεν Ἡρώδης. Καὶ κατεπάυθη ὁ Θόρυβος ἐν Ιεροσολύμοις. Τότε λοιπὸν ἤμην δοξάζων τὸν Θεὸν, τὸν δόντα μοι τοιαύτην σοφίαν, τῦ γράψαι ὑμῖν τοῖς πνευματικοῖς, καὶ ἀγαπῶσι τὸν Θεὸν, ᾧ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος, εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· Ἀμήν. So concludes the Protevangelium of the pretended St. James. The Goſpel of the Infancy, which paſſed for the compoſition of his fellow Apoſtle, St. Thomas, has this exordium: Ἀναγκαῖον ἡγησάμην ἐγὼ Θωμᾶς ὁ Ισραηλίτης, πᾶσι τοῖς ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἀδελφοῖς γνώρισαι τὰ παιδικὰ καὶ μεγαλεῖα τῦ Χριςῦ, ὅσα ἐποίησεν ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν καὶ Θεὸς Ιησῦς Χριςὸς, γεννηθεὶς ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ Βηθλεὲμ, εξιςάμενος· ὧν ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐςὶν αὕτη.

VIII. WHATSOEVER idea may have been formed of the character of Jeſus Chriſt, with reſpect to the reality of his divine miſſion, it is univerſally allowed, that he is repreſented, in the Canonical Scriptures, as a being ſingularly virtuous and amiable. Some of the moſt violent enemies to his pretenſions, as acting under the immediate authority of Heaven, have, however, acknowledged the excellence of his conduct, as a man; and ſcarcely has any petulance,

or

or malevolence, dared to breathe a whiſper againſt his wiſdom, fortitude, and benevolence. We might here pauſe to obſerve, that a character ſo ſingular, yet ſo intereſting, ſo exceeding the ordinary courſe of nature, yet ſo perfectly compatible with it, muſt have been drawn from the life: ſcarcely could any human imagination have drawn ſuch a character from the ſtores of it's own invention, and certainly not the imagination of the ſacred hiſtorians. However that may be, it muſt be admitted that the deſcription they have given of their maſter, is ſplendid and original, and calculated to raiſe in the minds of their readers, no other ſentiments, but thoſe of love, and awe, and admiration. But the Apocryphal writers have ſhewn themſelves ſo little expert in their trade of fiction, that they have deſcribed this exalted character in a manner, ſuited only to a vain and petulant boy, exerting his miraculous powers from ſilly oſtentation, or for the worſe purpoſe of gratifying ſome malignant paſſion. This is a ſubject upon which it would be painful to dwell, if we did not recollect that, by expoſing errour, we are promoting the cauſe of truth. Amidſt a variety

riety of ſimilar inſtances, the following doubtleſs will appear quite ſufficient to verify my obſervation.

Alio die, cum veſperi Dominus Jeſus cum Joſepho domum reverteretur, obviàm habuit puerum, qui curſu rapido concitatus, impellebat ipſum, ut caderet. Cui Dominus Jeſus; Quemadmodùm me impuliſti, ita cades, neque ſurges: eâdémque horâ corruit puer, et exſpiravit. — — — Ad alium deinde magiſtrum doctiorem eum deduxerunt, qui ut eum conſpexit, dic Aleph, inquit. Cúmque dixiſſet Aleph, Magiſter ipſum Beth pronunciare jubebat. Cui reſpondens Dominus Jeſus, dic mihi, inquit, priùs ſignificationem literæ Aleph, et tunc Beth pronunciabo. Hic cùm ſublatâ manu eum verberaret Magiſter, confeſtim manus ipſius exaruit, et mortuus eſt. Tunc dicebat Joſephus Divæ Mariæ: ab hoc tempore non ſinemus eum domo exire; quoniam quiſquis ipſi adverſatur, morte plectitur *.

We may add alſo, that in the writings and in the ſayings, attributed to Jeſus through errour, or a leſs pardonable cauſe, there are no traces of that wiſdom, which drew from the

* Vid. Evangel. Infant. capp. 47. and 49.

the mouth of his adverſaries that remarkable acknowledgement, "Never man ſpake like this man *;" but we meet with puerile alluſions, obſcure expreſſions, and myſtical conceits, characteriſtic only of thoſe intellects, by which they were obtruded upon the world †.

Such are the compoſitions which attempted to gain credit, as the real productions of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts; and ſo ſtriking is the contraſt between *them* and the genuine writings, whoſe ſtyle they have ſo unſucceſsfully endeavoured to imitate. It deſerves the moſt ſerious conſideration of every one, who is unhappily prejudiced againſt Chriſtianity, or (what is almoſt as fatal) who has hitherto not thought the ſubject

* John vii. 46.

† Vid. Fabric. de Scriptis Chriſto tributis, and De dictis Chriſti à p. 303. ad p. 337. Among other forgeries is a curious Epiſtle, purporting to have been ſent from heaven by our Saviour, equally barbarous in ſtyle, and deſpicable in materials. Moneo vos per Epiſtolam iſtam, ut in Eccleſias meas nullus ſit, non vir, non mulier, qui præſumat fabulare aut verboſare aut ſedere aut ante Miſſa egredere, donec compleantur ſolemnia, anathema ſit . . . . . Et poſtea Adam de limo terræ plaſmavi et Die Dominico ſanctificavi et dedi requiem in ipſo, ut bene agant et ſine preſſurâ ſint et requieſcant per omnia. —pp. 311, 312.

ſubject worthy his attention, whether, if the Canonical books of the New Teſtament had been the productions of artifice or deluſion, they would not have reſembled thoſe, which are avowedly ſo, in ſome of their defects. Suppoſing it, for a moment, to be a matter of doubt, by whom the Canonical books were written; or allowing them the credit, which is granted to all other writings having the ſame external authority, that of being written by the authors whoſe names they have always borne; upon either of theſe ſuppoſitions, the writers of the New Teſtament could not, either in ſituation or attainment, have had any advantages, humanly ſpeaking, which the authors of the Apocryphal books were not as likely to have poſſeſſed as themſelves: conſequently, if the firſt books had been founded upon the baſis of fiction, it is ſurely moſt probable, that ſubſequent attempts would have equalled, if not improved upon, the firſt efforts of impoſture. If, however, it appears upon a candid and cloſe inveſtigation, that one ſet of compoſitions betrays no proofs of a deſign to impoſe upon others, and no marks that the authors were themſelves deceived; while on the contrary, the others evince,

evince, in every page, the plaineſt ſymptoms of miſtake and fraud; is it fair, is it reaſonable, to aſcribe to a common origin productions ſo palpably and eſſentially different? or rather, is it not more juſt, and even philoſophical, to reſpect truth in thoſe performances, which bear the fair ſtamp of her features; and to abandon thoſe, and thoſe only to contempt, which have indubitable traces of impoſture?

CHAPTER II.

ON THE PROOF ARISING FROM THE NATURE AND STRENGTH OF THE PREJUDICES OF THE JEWS.

Peculiarities in the character of the Jewiſh people.—Prophecies concerning the Meſſiah.—Expectations formed in conſequence of them.—Appearance of falſe prophets.—In what manner Jeſus appeared, in the character of the expected Meſſiah.—His conduct and doctrine.—Goſpel, how preached after his death.—The Chriſtian religion not founded in impoſture, or enthuſiaſm.—The actions of Jeſus conſidered with reference to each of theſe ſuppoſitions.—Jewiſh zealots.—Inference from the foregoing facts.—Recapitulation.

IT is an undoubted fact, that the Jewiſh Nation has, from the earlieſt ages, received the books of Moſes, and the writings comprehended under the name of the Old Teſtament, as of divine authority; and that it has regarded them, as containing an authentic narrative of tranſactions, and an inviolable rule of faith. Nor is it leſs certain, that the diſciples of Moſes were diſtinguiſhed from all the other inhabitants of the earth, before the publication of the Chriſtian religion,

gion, by this particularity of opinion and conduct, and by other peculiarities, founded upon, or proceeding from it. The important advantages which they conceived themſelves to enjoy, as the choſen people of God, raiſed them ſo high in their own eſtimation, that they looked down with contempt upon all their fellow creatures: from the ſuperiour purity and correctneſs of their notions reſpecting the Deity, they entertained an averſion to every ſpecies of Polytheiſm: and the ſtrict and repeated injunctions, contained in their laws, prohibiting all communication with idolaters, cauſed them by degrees to imbibe a moſt unſocial and illiberal fear of polluting themſelves, by any intercourſe with the nations of the earth *.

AMONGST

* Nec illud omittendum videtur, à Judæis, non eos tantùm à quibus læſi eſſent ullo modo, ſed omnes etiam idololatras in hoſtium numero eſſe habitos. Undè ab alienigenis adeò liberalitatem ſuam arcebant, ut ne communia quidem humanitatis officia illis præſtarent, quale eſt viam monſtrare comiter. Juvenal. Sat. xiv. 103. Roſenmuller. ad Matth. v. 43. To the ſame effect Moſheim expreſſes himſelf. Humanitatis et amoris officia nullis ſeſe debere putabant, niſi aut ſanguinis et naturæ, aut religionis ſaltem et ſacrorum communitate ſecum junctis: in quo modum omnem ita excedebant, ut ſummis alienigenas injuriis afficere, ſibi licitum ducerent, et omnem eorum conſuetudinem et victum, quantùm poſſent, fugerent. Quapropter non immeritò à Græcis et Romanis *odii generis humani* poſtulabantur. De Reb. Chriſtian. ante Conſtantin.

AMONGST the writings, eſteemed by the Jews to be of divine authority, there were many, which they conſidered as prophetic of future events. In the claſſification of the writings held ſacred by them, a place was expreſſly aſſigned to thoſe of the prophets: nor were there any, which they appear to have ſtudied with more aſſiduity or eagerneſs. In conſequence of the numerous and marked intimations, which ſome of theſe prophetic writings conveyed, a general expectation prevailed, that a perſonage was to be born among them, to execute various purpoſes of favour, and kindneſs to their nation: and this perſonage was looked for under the name of the Meſſiah, or, the Anointed of God. That he was to be poſſeſſed of conſiderable power, and atchieve ſome remarkable deliverance for them, was confidently pronounced to be the ſenſe of theſe prophecies. And ſo perſuaded were they of the truth of this interpretation, and ſuch anxiety did it occaſion, that a notion was

Conſtantin. p. 40. See Elſner. Obſervat. Sacr. in N. F. libb. in Epiſt. 1. ad Theſſ. ii. 15. See alſo the precept of a Jewiſh doctor, quoted by Schoettgenius in his Horæ Hebraicæ ad Matt. v. 43. Noli gentilibus benevolentiam aut miſericordiam exhibere.

was ſpread very generally among the heathens* alſo concerning ſome great character, who was about to riſe in the eaſtern part of the world, and attain univerſal dominion. The teſtimony of heathen hiſtorians ſatisfactorily confirms this fact; though the hopes, excited by the circumſtance amongſt the heathens and the Jews, tended very naturally to different, nay, oppoſite concluſions. The other nations looked only for a maſter of the Roman world: the Jews impatiently expected a Prince, who ſhould ſubject that empire to the Jewiſh yoke†. For it is here of importance to collect, what the general ſentiments of the Jews‡ were, reſpecting the character and conduct of this extraordinary

* This is evident, not only from the well known paſſages in Tacitus and Suetonius, but from the words of Celſus alſo, which are cited by Lardner, Works, Vol. I. p. 133.

† There is a very remarkable paſſage in Joſephus upon this point, quoted and commented upon by Lardner. When the city was actually taken, he ſays: "But that which principally encouraged them to the war, was an ambiguous oracle, found alſo in their ſacred writings, that about this time ſome one from their country ſhould obtain the empire of the world. This they underſtood to belong to themſelves; and many of the wiſe men were miſtaken in their judgement about it: for the oracle intended the government of Veſpaſian, who was proclaimed emperor in Judæa." De Bell. Jud. lib. vi. c. 5. ſect. 4. ap. Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 54.

‡ This ſubject is handled in a maſterly manner by Dr. White. Bampton Lecture, pp. 112—134. See alſo pp. 225—233.

extraordinary perſonage, at the time, when Jeſus of Nazareth aſſumed to himſelf the title and office of Meſſias.

FROM an examination of the prophetic writings, and of the interpretations affixed to them by Jewiſh commentators, it appears that the Meſſiah was repreſented under the titles of a prince, a judge *, and a ſhepherd †: that

* See the paſſages quoted by Orobio in his friendly conference with Limborch, in the treatiſe written by the latter upon that occaſion, de Verit. Chriſtianæ Relig. Goudæ, 1687. p. 7. Futurus erat Rex, (is Orobio's comment upon theſe texts) Judex, paſtor: Iſrael vero neque regem vidit, neque Judicem, neque paſtorem: de regno ſpirituali in cœlo, de Judice in cœlo præter Deum, de paſtore in cœlo, nunquam à Deo admonitus, p. 8. See Limborch's reply to this reaſoning, pp. 19—22. The objections of Orobio are repeated p. 53. and again confuted p. 192. &c. I am the more deſirous of referring my reader to theſe arguments of Orobio, becauſe they repreſent the opinions of the unbelieving Jews, at the time of our Saviour, as well as in every age which has ſucceeded that period. Who can forbear exclaiming with St. Paul, that "blindneſs in part has happened to Iſrael?" Rom. xi. 25.

† I would obſerve, that this imagery, taken from paſtoral life, has found it's way into other languages; and ſeems to have continued even in thoſe times, when compoſition, as well as manners, became refined. Hence the metaphor in Homer, ποιμὴν λαῶν—and the compariſon (Il. Γ. 196.) Αὐτὰρ ὃ τίλος ὣς ἐπιπωλεῖται ῥίχας ἀνδρῶν. Pindar has

— πωλῆτος ὁ λα-
-χὼν ποιμένα ἱπαχτὸν ἀλλότριον. Ol. x.

And in the ode immediately following, uſes ποιμαίνω in a ſenſe equally figurative. Horace has complied with his maſter's practice in this reſpect;

Regum timendorum in proprios *greges*,
Reges in ipſos imperium eſt Jovis.

that he was to be deſcended from David, upon whoſe throne he was to ſit, and that he was to poſſeſs a kingdom, which ſhould comprehend both Jews and Gentiles.

These deſcriptions they applied in a literal ſenſe; and as the bleſſings promiſed under the law, were chiefly of a temporal nature, they interpreted in the ſame manner the paſſages, which announced the future glories of the Meſſiah's kingdom. They expected in conſequence of theſe prophecies, a deliverer from preſent, temporal evils: a mighty prince and conqueror, who was to exceed the power of his great anceſtors, David and Solomon, and not only to free the choſen people of God from the yoke under which they laboured, but to ſubject the other nations in their turn to the Jewiſh yoke. Above all, they expected him to confirm the ſanctions of the Moſaic law, and to continue it's ſplendid, though cumberſome *, ritual. Indeed a rooted attachment to the cuſtoms and ceremonies of their forefathers, and the belief of their unceaſing efficacy, ſo ſteadfaſtly clung to the mind of every

* See Orobio ubi ſuprà, pp. 95, 115. and Limborch, pp. 305, 332, &c.

every Jew, that he could not ſeparate them from the idea of a prophet ſent from God, charged with the delivery of peculiar bleſſings to his people.—An union of the prophet and the prince, formed, in their judgement, a neceſſary part of the character of their Meſſiah: but ſtill the prophetical, as well as princely, office, according to their miſtaken interpretations, was to be ſubſervient to temporal purpoſes.

It deſerves moreover to be remarked, that the ſituation in which the Jews were placed, at the period of their hiſtory to which we refer, (which was during the reign of Auguſtus) not only made them expect the Meſſiah with conſiderable impatience, but increaſed their natural propenſity to interpret the prophetic declarations in a manner ſtrictly literal. For they were in a ſtate of bondage to idolatrous * governours, a circumſtance humiliating at all times to thoſe, whoſe anceſtors had received ſuch ſignal marks of God's peculiar favour; and particularly ſo, when the pride and rigour of the Phariſees, and other leading men of the nation, carried to it's greateſt height, a bigoted and unſocial ſpirit, to which,

* See Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 54.

which, by miſtaking and perverting the plain injunctions of their law, they had ſo long habituated themſelves, as to render it a prominent feature in their national character. In this ſenſe of deliverance from the Roman yoke, they looked for a deliverer and a redeemer: in this ſenſe they expected a prince, who was to wreſt the ſovereignty from their preſent powerful maſters: and in this favourite ſenſe of ſubjugation to their temporal authority, and of obedience to the Moſaic ritual, did they view the awful declarations concerning the extent of the Meſſiah's kingdom among the Gentiles.

THERE cannot be a plainer proof of the fact, that ſuch an expectation was generally entertained by the Jews at that particular time, and that ſuch was the train of ideas by which that expectation was accompanied, than that a variety of perſons, at this very period, aſſumed to themſelves a title and character correſponding with thoſe notions. This of itſelf is a very important hiſtorical fact, and it occurs frequently in the narrative of the tranſactions of thoſe times. For at what period may we aſk, in the hiſtory, not of any other, but of the Jewiſh nation, did ſo many perſons appear,

aſſuming to themſelves the title and office of a Meſſiah, but at the times immediately preceding the miniſtry of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſubſequent to it? Such however is the hiſtorical fact. "The numerous falſe Prophets and falſe Chriſts of whom Joſephus ſpeaks ſo frequently, and ſo diſtinctly, are full proofs of it *."

THE prevailing expectation of a deliverer from the yoke of the Romans, induced many a bigoted enthuſiaſt, and many a factious impoſtor, to place himſelf at the head of the credulous multitude. The character they aſſumed, and the promiſes they held out to their followers, uniformly agreed with the popular prepoſſeſſions, and favoured the national hopes. Freedom from an idolatrous yoke, and the triumph of the Moſaic law, were ſounds that never vibrated in the ears of a Jew, without rouſing him to immediate action. And ſuch was the general infatuation, that, although each ſucceſſive pretender diſguiſed himſelf in the ſame maſk, and inſpired the ſame hopes, the ſame eager, but diſappointed, hopes; ſtill ſo confident were the expectations of the people, and ſo anxious their wiſhes, that followers

* Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 60. See alſo p. 59.

followers were never wanting to the banner of ſedition and impoſture.

A SHORT view of the conduct of ſome of theſe falſe prophets*, and of their pretenſions, will diſtinctly mark the difference of character between them and the true Meſſiah, and ſhew what were the grounds, upon which alone the pretenders to the prophetic character could build their expectations of ſucceſs.

"WHILST Fadus was procurator of Judea," (ſays Joſephus) "a certain impoſtor called Theudas, perſuaded a very great multitude, taking their effects along with them, to

* It is of importance to tranſcribe from Lardner, ſome obſervations of Abp. Tillotſon, and of Grotius, concerning theſe falſe prophets. "Joſephus", ſays the former, "mentions ſeveral of theſe; of whom, though he does not expreſſly ſay that they called themſelves the Meſſias, yet he ſays that which is equivalent—that they undertook to reſcue the people from the Roman yoke. Which was the thing which the Jews expected the Meſſias would do for them. And therefore we find that the diſciples, who were going to Emmaus, and knew not that Chriſt was riſen, and were doubtful what to think of him, ſay: *We hoped this had been he that ſhould have delivered Iſrael:* that is, they hoped this had been the Meſſias; that being, it ſeems, a common periphraſis of the Meſſias, that he was *he that was to deliver Iſrael.*" Vol. III. p. 552. "Chriſti nomine populus Judaicus intelligebat vindicem libertatis. Nam illud, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἠλπίζομεν, ὅτι αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ μέλλων λυτροῦσθαι τὸν Ἰσραήλ, deſcriptio eſt nominis Chriſti. Quare quicumque ſe miſſos divinitùs liberatores populi Judaici dicebant, eo ipſo Chriſtos ſe profitebantur, et erant ψευδόχριστοι, &c." Grot. in Matth xxiv. 5. Lardner's Works, Vol. VII. p. 59.

to follow him to the river Jordan; for he ſaid he was a prophet, and that, cauſing the river to divide at his command, he would give them an eaſy paſſage over. By theſe ſpeeches he deceived many. But Fadus was far from ſuffering them to go on in their madneſs; for he ſent out a troop of horſe, who coming upon them unexpectedly, ſlew many, and took many priſoners. Theudas himſelf was among the latter; they cut off his head, and brought it to Jeruſalem *."

"But the Egyptian falſe prophet brought a yet heavier diſaſter upon the Jews. For this impoſtor coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thouſand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderneſs up to the mount of Olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jeruſalem, and having beaten the Roman guard, to bring the people into ſubjection to him, and govern them by the help of his armed aſſociates. But Felix, coming ſuddenly upon him with the Roman ſoldiers, prevented the attack: and all the people joined with him in their own

* Joſeph. Antiq. Jud. lib. xx. c. 5. ſect. 1. Lardner places this event in the year of Chriſt 45, or 46.

own defence, ſo that when they came to engage, the Egyptian fled, followed by a few only. A great number of thoſe who were with him, were either ſlain or taken priſoners. The reſt of the multitude being ſcattered, ſhifted for themſelves as they could *."

In another place he ſays, "The country was again filled with robbers and impoſtors, who deceived the people." And ſoon afterwards, "Now theſe impoſtors and deceivers perſuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderneſs, and pretended that they would exhibit manifeſt wonders and ſigns, that ſhould be performed by the providence of God †." And again, "Deceivers and impoſtors, under a pretence of divine inſpiration, aiming at changes and innovations, made the people mad; and induced them to follow them into the wilderneſs, pretending that God would there give them ſigns and wonders ‡."

Such

* Joſeph. de Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 13. ſect. 5.

† Antiq. Jud. lib. xx. c. 8. ſect. 5, 6.

‡ De Bell. Jud. lib. ii. c. 13. ſect. 4. See other paſſages to the ſame effect in Lardner, Vol. VII. p. 58. See alſo Newcome's obſervations on our Lord's conduct, p. 203, &c. Baſnage's Hiſt. des Juifs, c. vi. ſect. 10. Edit. 1707.

To ſhew the immutability of the Jewiſh character in every ſituation, the obſtinacy with which they continue to adhere to

Such then appear to have been the peculiar opinions, and the eager expectations of the Jews, juſt before the coming of Chriſt. A rigid, inflexible attachment to the Moſaic law, the obligation of which they conceived to be perpetual; an inordinate conceit of their own ſuperiour merit, in the

to the favourite, but erroneous, ideas of their anceſtors, and the readineſs with which they liſten to every enthuſiaſt who flatters their hopes, I ſubjoin a ſhort account of another impoſtor, who appeared about 400 years afterwards. "He pretended to be a ſecond Moſes, ſent to deliver the Jews who dwelt in Crete, and promiſed to divide the ſea, and give them a ſafe paſſage through it. They aſſembled together, with their wives, and their children, and followed him to a Promontory. He then commanded them to caſt themſelves into the ſea. Many of them readily obeyed him, and periſhed in the waters; and many were taken up, and ſaved by fiſhermen. Upon this, the deluded multitude would have torn the impoſtor to pieces." Jortin's remarks on Eccleſ. Hiſtory, Vol. II. p. 352. The ſame learned author has preſerved an account of twenty one ſucceſſive enthuſiaſts, who, ſince the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, have ſported with the credulity of the Jews. The pretenſions were ſimilar in all; their means of ſucceſs at firſt the ſame; namely, their coinciding with the paſſions and views of the diſciples of Moſes; and their ultimate failure of ſucceſs was alſo the ſame. They could not realize the character they laid claim to. The obſervation with which Jortin cloſes this account, is well worth our notice. "It may ſeem ſtrange that they ſhould have rejected Chriſt, who gave them ſo many proofs of his miſſion, and yet ſhould follow every impoſtor, who pretended to be the Meſſias without offering any ſufficient or even plauſible evidence of it. The reaſon is plain: Our Saviour, by not ſetting up a temporal kingdom, daſhed all their worldly views at once; but the other claimers of the title of the Meſſiah began with promiſes of delivering them from their enemies; and reſtoring them to their country and loſt liberties." Ibid. p. 378.

the ſight of God, and a proportionate contempt for all other nations. They were in almoſt daily expectation of a choſen prophet from heaven, who ſhould be armed with power to deliver them from their enemies, aſſert the ſuperiority as well as permanence of the Moſaic inſtitutions, and extend, over all the world, the empire of the ſons of Abraham. Theſe opinions and expectations, it muſt be remembered, were rivetted with the greater force, and indulged with the leſs ſcruple, as they conceived them to be founded upon the will of the Almighty; and conſequently that their opinions could not be wrong, nor their expectations fruſtrated. Nor were theſe the caſual ſentiments of the vulgar and unthinking, or the laboured interpretations of the ſtudious only; but they were the collective and unanimous ſentiments of the whole body of the people; inſomuch that there probably were but few, ſufficiently enlightened, and ſufficiently unprejudiced, not to participate in them *.

HAVING taken a view of the opinions that prevailed univerſally among the Jews, let

* See this argued and proved by Moſheim, de Rebb. Chriſtianor. ante Conſtantinum, p. 40.

let us conſider, what are the leading features of the conduct purſued by Jeſus, and what the diſtinguiſhing marks of the religion which he publiſhed, in the character of their long expected Prophet and Meſſias. The ſcheme of this religion was certainly developed very ſlowly, nor was it fully unfolded till ſome time after his death; but I ſhall endeavour to place it before my readers, as nearly as I can, in the way in which it was gradually laid open.

THE firſt important fact which forces itſelf upon our obſervation, after peruſing the magnificent deſcriptions of the perſon and office of the Meſſiah, and comparing them with the received interpretations of the age in which Jeſus appeared, is, the humble and lowly manner in which he was uſhered into the world. His reputed father exerciſed a mean occupation; he was born in the ſtable of an inn*; his abode was at Nazareth,

* I uſe theſe terms, becauſe there are no words in our language, which correſpond accurately with πανδοχῖον and κατάλυμα. Dr. Campbell has explained them very ſatisfactorily, from Buſbequius, in his notes on Luke ii. 7. It appears then, that Mary was delivered in a place (inferiour, in point of accommodation, to what is known under the name of Caravanſary) in which travellers and their cattle were under the ſame roof, and not ſeparated by any partition-wall from each other. Whether φάτνη means "a wooden manger,"

Nazareth, in a part of Judea of the worſt repute; his life was paſſed in privacy; nor till the age of thirty years, is he recorded, but upon one occaſion, as having at all diſtinguiſhed himſelf.

THE next thing deſerving of notice is the ſpirituality of his kingdom, and of the bleſſings which it was to diffuſe: which was plainly intimated in the very outſet of his miniſtry, although not diſtinctly underſtood by his followers.

ANOTHER, and moſt remarkable circumſtance, is the ſuperiority which Jeſus aſſerted over Moſes, and this too, in the very commencement of his miniſtry. We find him not only extending the ſanctions of the moral law, delivered by that prophet, but expreſſly altering ſome of his regulations *. In the ſame diſcourſe, he reprehends and counteracts the unſocial and illiberal ſpirit of the Jewiſh people; inſtructing and commanding them, that, ſo far from ſhewing

ger," or whether, as Bp. Pearce ſuppoſes, it means one "made of coarſe cloth, like thoſe out of which the horſes of our troopers are fed, when encamped in the field", is a queſtion not very material.

* Compare Matth. v. 27, 31, 32. and xix. 8, 9. with Deut. xxiv. 1. and Matt. v. 38, 39. with Exod. xxi. 24, Levit. xxiv. 20. and Deut. xix. 21.

ing animoſity againſt ſtrangers, they ſhould love their very enemies. He pointedly condemned the external religion practiſed in his days, and diſcountenanced the mere ritual obſervances, in which chiefly conſiſted the religion, which was valued or enjoined by the degenerate followers of Moſes. He diſtinctly and authoritatively affirmed the ſum of the law and the prophets to conſiſt in this: "Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them." Not long after this, he expreſſly declared the admiſſion of the other nations into his kingdom, to the excluſion of the unbelieving Jews: a doctrine, confirmed indeed by the evidence of ſubſequent facts, but at the time when it was firſt delivered, very new, and very offenſive to his followers.

By adopting language, and mixing in ſociety with a frankneſs and unreſervedneſs, diſguſting to the feelings, and contrary to the practice, of his countrymen, he excited the ſurpriſe of the well meaning diſciples of John, and rouſed the indignation of the formal and rigid Phariſee. Indeed, he never declined the ſociety of publican or ſinner, of Gentile or Samaritan: he even ſtudiouſly embraced every opportunity of marking with diſapprobation, the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

the national and local prejudices, ſo prevalent amongſt the Jews: and whenever he ſaw a ſpirit of docility and of ſincerity, he gladly diſpenſed his inſtructions "without reſpect of perſons." Upon ſuch occaſions, when the great and ſubſtantial ends of his divine miſſion could be promoted, however he might excite ſuſpicion, or inflame rancour, againſt himſelf, he diſdained to practiſe the harſh and uncharitable maxims of bigotry towards any one, whoſe employment, country, or religion ſhould unfortunately ſubject him to the imputation of oppreſſion, ſchiſm, or profaneneſs. It is recorded alſo, that in the courſe of his miniſtry, he choſe twelve perſons, to be in a more eſpecial manner his followers, and diſciples. Nor perhaps could he have ſtruck at the very root of the generally received opinions concerning the Meſſiah more directly, than by the choice of aſſociates *, mean in their circumſtances, humble, and even vilified in their occupation; and deſtitute both of talents, and knowledge. Such aſſociates were little ſuited to promote the views of a prince and a conqueror; and the ſelection of them was plainly a renunciation of

* See Newcome's Obſervations, &c. p. 401.

of that pomp and diſtinction, which were generally conceived to be eſſential to the character of the reſtorer of Iſrael. To convey indeed to theſe his companions, a juſter notion of his pretenſions, and his deſtination; and to guard them from entertaining any hope of worldly proſperity or comfort, in conſequence of being thus preferred to their countrymen, he expreſſly warned them of the perſecutions they muſt undergo, and enjoined them ſtrictly "not to fear them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul*."

Upon another occaſion, he incurred the charge of violating the ſabbath; and inſtead of making any effort to pacify the leading men, who were aiming at his deſtruction, he cenſured them in the moſt pointed and indignant terms. And whereas his adverſaries frequently importuned him to ſhew ſome ſign† from Heaven, in order to convince them, beyond the poſſibility of doubt, that he was the Deliverer and Prince they expected, he conſtantly refuſed to comply with their demand; and thus afforded them a ſpecious

* See Matt. x. 28, 34, 38.

† Matt. xii. 38. xvi. 1—4. Mark viii. 12. John ii. 18. See Lardner's Works, Vol. VII. p. 54. Newcome, p. 296.

ſpecious argument* for continuing to deny the validity of his pretenſions, becauſe he did not repreſent the character of the Meſſias in a manner, correſponding with their erroneous and ſhort-ſighted notions. Upon various occaſions afterwards, we find him, in the moſt open and direct manner, diſcountenancing the doctrines† and the practices of the leading men of the Jewiſh ſects. But leſt he ſhould ſeem to diſguſt only his avowed enemies, whoſe favour he could not acquire, and whoſe reſentment he could not increaſe, we find him purſuing the ſame impolitic

* The Scribes and Phariſees, no doubt, urged this argument very triumphantly in defence of their unbelief, and the modern Scribes and Phariſees, may, perhaps, find in it as potent a piece of logic, as any in the records of ſcepticiſm. Our Lord performed miracles, ſufficient, one would think, in number, importance, and publicity, to have juſtified his extraordinary claims. But becauſe he did not exhibit a particular ſign, at a particular time, and place, at the requeſt of his rancorous opponents, they inſulted, renounced, and deſtroyed him. It is difficult to ſay, where the demands of unbelievers would ſtop, if our Lord had indulged the petulant and unreaſonable deſires of the primitive infidels. Miracles might be called for in every age, by every individual, with equal reaſon, and, if granted, would then loſe their very character and efficacy. Since, however, this fact *appears* to ſupply an argument againſt the divine Miſſion of Jeſus, I would ſuggeſt to the conſideration of thoſe, who are tempted to employ it, whether, being ſo often and ſo unequivocally mentioned, it does not furniſh a proof of the ingenuouſneſs and veracity of thoſe hiſtorians, in whoſe writings it is found, and againſt whoſe cauſe, if it have any weight as an objection, it muſt certainly operate.

† Matt. xv. 2—9.

politic conduct (in a worldly point of view) towards his beſt friends, and firmeſt adherents: ſince he made no ſcruple of proclaiming to his diſciples, the certainty of an event, the moſt repugnant to their feelings, and the moſt adverſe to their private and public wiſhes that can poſſibly be conceived. He diſtinctly told them, that he was actually to be put to death by the malice of his countrymen, and by the power of the Romans*. He indeed added, that he ſhould riſe again from the dead; but that aſſurance had no effect in relieving the minds of his friends, or rather, they ſeem not to have believed either the one, or the other, part of the prediction, till events actually confirmed it.

AFTER the triumphant entry of Jeſus into Jeruſalem, attended ſtill with circumſtances likely to incenſe the ruling men of the ſtate, he marked, in the language of indignant reproach, the cruelty and diſobedience of his countrymen; and foretold their rejection from the favour of God in ſuch plain terms, that "when the chief prieſts and Phariſees had heard his parables, they perceived that he ſpake of them†." At another time he even avoided the multitude,

* Matt. xvi. 21—23. xvii. 22, 23. xx. 18, 19.
† Matth. xxi. 45.

titude, when they wiſhed to make him a king*, and was ſo far from encouraging them in any act of reſiſtance to the Roman power, that when the queſtion upon the legality of that power was directly at iſſue between him and the Jewiſh rulers†, he authoritatively enjoined them to "render unto Cæſar the things that be Cæſar's."

In order to correct the ideas of his diſciples, about the permanency of the Jewiſh polity, he announced, in plain and expreſs terms, the impending deſtruction of Jeruſalem and it's temple‡: and after ſome intimations of his approaching fate, ſtill more diſtinct,

* John vi. 15. He expreſſly declined the exerciſe of all temporal authority upon another occaſion. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Luke xii. 14. But he readily availed himſelf of the application, as a religious and moral inſtructor.

† Luke xx. 19, &c. Matth. xxii. 15, &c.

‡ If it be objected, that theſe denunciations againſt the Jews were the reſult of ſpleen, becauſe his own doctrines were rejected, or his own authority was diſputed; be it remembered, that, in the very opening of his miniſtry he had attacked their prejudices; that through the whole courſe of that miniſtry, he varied the mode of his attack as circumſtances required; and that, in no poſſible event, could he employ this oppoſition, as an inſtrument of giving effect to impoſture. To alienate thoſe whom he meant to deceive, and by deceiving to govern, was to counteract his own purpoſes, to gratify reſentment at the expence of ambition, and to multiply, not followers, by whom he might be obeyed, but foes, by whom he might be cruſhed.

diſtinct, we find him overturning the hopes of his followers at once, by his ſubmiſſion to an ignominious death.

SOME ſhort time after the crucifixion of this extraordinary perſon, it is an unqueſtionable fact, that his diſciples, thoſe, who in the life-time of their maſter were bigoted and ambitious Jews, devoted their whole lives to anxiety, poverty and pain, for the ſake of preaching a ſpiritual religion: they not only preached to the Samaritans (that hoſtile and inveterate people, againſt whom their animoſity had been formerly ſo great) but they alſo converted heathens, freely admitting them to all the privileges of the goſpel; and declared by a ſolemn edict, that circumciſion and an adherence to the Moſaic law were no longer neceſſary. St. Paul in particular, who had cheriſhed from his infancy the profoundeſt reverence for the religion of Moſes, and had interwoven with it, the erroneous interpretations and intolerant notions of the times, became on a ſudden ſo warmly attached to the cauſe of Chriſtianity, that he readily undertook the peculiar office of announcing to the Gentiles their deliverance from the ceremonial law. It is alſo worth our notice, that, within

within a few years after the propagation of the goſpel, ſuch Jewiſh converts to the Chriſtian religion, as were ſtill deſirous of conforming to the law of Moſes, dwindled down to a ſmall ſect, known by the name of Nazarenes*, very inconſiderable both in number and reputation, and ſcarcely ſurviving the ſpace of three centuries. Whereas ſuch Jews as remained unconverted, have ſtill preſerved the peculiar rites of the Moſaic law, adhered to them with all poſſible ſtrictneſs, explained and enforced them by the elaborate comment of their moſt learned doctors, and tranſmitted them to their poſterity with ſcrupulous care (as far as the change in their circumſtances will permit); and ſtill look for a Meſſiah†, in the ſame worldly

* Theſe Nazarenes, as well as the Ebionites, with whom they have been improperly confounded, are ſpoken of by Moſheim as, "ſectis, obſcuris, exiguis, ingenio et fautoribus deſtitutis." De Reb. Chriſtian. p. 333.

† See this opinion at large, in the words of Manaſſeh Ben Iſrael, quoted by Limborch, p. 221. So alſo Maimonides, as cited by Prideaux, Letter to the Deiſts, p. 137. "The Meſſias ſhall come, and reſtore the kingdom of the houſe of David to the ancient ſtate of it's former dominion, and ſhall rebuild the temple, and gather together the diſperſed of Iſrael; and then ſhall be re-eſtabliſhed the legal rites and conſtitutions, as in former times; and ſacrifices ſhall be offered, and the ſabbatical years and jubilees obſerved, according to every precept delivered in the law." See the religious tenets of the Jews (Art. 12.) as ſtated by Butler in his Horæ Biblicæ, p. 90.

worldly and carnal ſenſe with their anceſtors, who were contemporary with Jeſus.

If ſuch was the conduct, and ſuch were the doctrines of Jeſus and his diſciples, and if ſuch were the conſequences of the religion which they publiſhed to the world, it is to the laſt degree improbable, if not morally impoſſible, that Chriſtianity ſhould have originated in miſtake or artifice. If we conſider it as an human ſcheme, brought about by human agency, it is neceſſary for us to recollect, that Jeſus, being born in Judea, of Jewiſh parents, and educated in the law of Moſes, muſt have felt from his infancy a profound reverence for that law, and imbibed, with the very air he breathed, a firm conviction of it's divine authority, and of it's ſacred obligation and unchangeableneſs. It could not be the caſe with a Jew, as with many of the heathens, that he looked upon the religion of his country as partly, or wholly, untrue; to which he conformed as a matter of ſtate policy; for which, whether any

For the impoſtors, who have taken advantage of theſe expectations, ſee note ‡ p. 79. To which may be added a curious teſtimony from Vanini. "Venetiis cùm eſſem, novi impuriſſimum impoſtorem Hebræum, qui ſuis perſuadebat, Meſſiam primo vere novâ pluviâ feſa demiſſurum: eum ranunculis, addebam ego." De admirandis Naturæ, &c. Dial. L. p. 360. Lutet. 1616.

any other were ſubſtituted, and to which, whether any additions were made, was perfectly indifferent, provided there was a ſtate religion. The Jews unqueſtionably conſidered, and ſtill do conſider, their religion, as delivered immediately from God; they believed, that the author of the univerſe watched over it's preſervation; and that he puniſhed or rewarded them, according as they conformed to it's regulations, or diſobeyed it's injunctions. With them too, religion was not abſtracted from civil concerns, nor from the privacy, or the engagements, of domeſtic life; it did not ſtand aloof, as it were, from their ordinary occupations, but it was entwined with their very thoughts, and interwoven with their habits: it mingled itſelf with the familiarity of ſocial intercourſe, and clung to the diſcharge of every public duty. With them it was education, morality, law, cuſtom, amuſement, employment, rivetted by all the ties of habit, enforced by all the ſanctions of authority, and combined with all the feelings of prejudice. A Jew wore the mark of his religion in his body: it formed a part of his dreſs: it was the ſubject of his converſation: the object of his pride, and of his affections.

affections. He conceived it's excellence to be equal to it's permanence; the one, as derived from the author of all good; the other, as aſſured by the promiſe of truth and omnipotence. He therefore had no more conception that it wanted improvement, than that it would be temporary in it's duration. He was as little diſpoſed to admit the propriety of any alteration in it, as he was to believe, that it's ſacrifices could ceaſe, it's ceremonies be abrogated, or it's temple deſtroyed. For this he willingly encountered the ſcorn and contempt of the reſt of the world; and in defence of it, he was ready to lay down his life.

SURELY then, it may be affirmed, that it never could have entered into the head or heart of a mere Jew, that the law of Moſes fell, in any way, ſhort of perfection; that it's ritual injunctions were to be aboliſhed, that the diſtinction between Jew and Gentile was to be utterly done away; nay, that the Gentile was to be admitted to the benefits of the promiſed kingdom of the Meſſiah, while ſome even of the once favoured children of Abraham would be excluded. Far leſs likely were ſuch ideas to occur to any one, who ſhould take upon himſelf the title of the

the expected Meſſiah; whoſe office was univerſally believed to be that of reſtoring and extending the influence of the Moſaic law, and erecting a temporal kingdom, to rule without limitation, and to endure without end.

Let us, however, for a moment ſuppoſe it poſſible, that ſo wild a thought, ſo ſacrilegious a ſcheme, ſhould have entered into the mind of Jeſus, conſidering him merely as a Jew; ſtill it is utterly improbable that he ſhould have acted upon it from any motive, by which the conduct of men is influenced, or with any expectation of ſucceſs. Fraud or errour, impoſture or enthuſiaſm, can be the only aſſignable motives, by which he could have been guided; and it will appear that none of theſe could operate upon the mind of Jeſus, ſo as to induce him to purſue the courſe, and to publiſh the doctrines, he is recorded to have purſued and publiſhed.

In proſecuting this argument, I ſhall readily grant, that the time, when Jeſus Chriſt appeared, was favourable to the pretenſions of an impoſtor. The numerous train of prophecies, already mentioned, undoubtedly gave the Jews reaſon to expect the appearance of ſome prince or prophet.

Their

Their uneaſineſs under the dominion of Rome, their indignation that the people of God ſhould live in humiliating ſubjection to profane ſtrangers, added the impatience of deſire to the earneſtneſs of expectation. It will, therefore, readily be admitted, that they were diſpoſed to liſten to the pretenſions of any impoſtor, who thought fit to aſſume the character thus anxiouſly looked for. But theſe very prophecies, and this very impatience, as they prediſpoſed the body of the people to hearken to the ſuggeſtions of a falſe prophet, operated upon them in a manner directly oppoſite, when they came to examine the character and pretenſions of Jeſus of Nazareth. For as the prophecies deſcribed the future Saviour, under the title of a prince and a deliverer; as he was to be deſcended from the royal line of David; their carnal and worldly minds appropriated theſe deſcriptions chiefly, if not excluſively, to the pomp and grandeur of temporal authority. Hence the very circumſtance, which, at the firſt glance, appears calculated to promote the ſucceſs of Jeſus, proved in reality to be an obſtacle of the moſt formidable kind. For ſince the expectation of ſuch a prophet was not a ſimple and unconnected ſentiment,

but

but combined with a variety of ideas, arising from aſſociations of the moſt acknowledged influence upon the human mind; whoever oppoſed and contradicted theſe ideas, virtually pronounced a ſentence againſt himſelf, in the judgment of his contemporaries, becauſe he did not appear in a manner conſonant with their expectations. The ideas ſo excited had, in fact, acquired a greater hold upon their minds, than the expectation in which they originated: and thus, by a proceſs of thought, not very unuſual, they inſenſibly forgot, that although he did not *ſeem to be* the character they expected, yet he certainly *might be* the character whom they *ought* to have expected, and whom they ought to have welcomed with Hoſannas of exultation, as their King and Redeemer.

If then Jeſus had been an impoſtor, he would undoubtedly have encouraged, to the utmoſt, the national prepoſſeſſions, and flattered the national pride; he would have taken care not to offend againſt any received opinion, or any favourite ſuperſtition; he would have courted the leaders of ſome prevailing party; he would probably have allied himſelf to the Phariſaical ſect, with marked and active oppoſition to the Sadducees; and ſecretly, if not avowedly, fomented the ge-

neral animoſity againſt the Romans. But it would have been utterly impoſſible for him to aſſume a character and deportment, which very few indeed, if any, of the Jews at that time, conceived to be the character of the Meſſiah: it would have been impoſſible for him to deliver a law, which apparently contradicted, and actually ſuperſeded, the law of Moſes: and when all the nation looked to the æra of the Meſſiah's advent, as the period, when they were not only to recover, but even outſhine, all their former ſplendour; it would have been impoſſible for him to damp the expectations, which he himſelf muſt have held in common with the reſt of his countrymen, by repeatedly aſſerting, that in a very few years, an event would take place, by which the inſtitutions of Moſes would be aboliſhed, and the Jewiſh nation reduced to a moſt deplorable ſtate of miſery and bondage. His deportment, in the character thus aſſumed, would have correſponded with the ideas formed of it, by the nation at large: more eſpecially as ſuch a repreſentation of the character ſuited the only views he could have had, if his intentions were fraudulent. His object, upon ſuch a tion, muſt have been worldly power, riches, or renown; conſequently, he would have omitted

omitted no art to win the multitude to his purpoſes; and when he had ſucceeded ſo far, as to ſecure the attachment of any conſiderable number, he would joyfully have accepted the offer of becoming their king; and would then have erected his ſtandard in oppoſition to the Romans. In ſhort, he would have conducted himſelf in the ſame way as the numerous pretenders to the ſame character did; he would have acted upon the ſame principles, and directed his views to the ſame end. It cannot be ſaid, that, as he had ſeen the ill ſucceſs of ſome of their attempts, he choſe to ſupport the character in a different manner; becauſe, the inſtances of ſuch falſe pretenſions, ſeem to have occurred but ſeldom *before* our Saviour's miniſtry; and we do not find that any one of the numerous pretenders, who ſtarted up *afterwards*, was deterred, by ſuch an apprehenſion, from acting the ſame part in the ſame manner with thoſe who preceded them;—and beſides all this, it cannot be made to appear, that, in the caſe of Jeſus, any intereſted or ambitious purpoſe would have been promoted, by the aſſumption of a ſpiritual character and office, and by the erection of a ſpiritual kingdom.

UNLESS therefore it can be clearly ſhewn, that ſome worldly advantage was to be derived from the ſucceſs of the goſpel ſcheme, it is folly to arraign it's author as an impoſtor; ſince a man of this character undoubtedly will not undertake a deſign, of which the expected advantages are not partially, if not wholly, confined to the preſent ſtate of exiſtence. It will hardly, I conceive, be contended, that Jeſus had a view ſolely to poſthumous fame; that, for the ſake of this expectation, he endured the pain and the ignominy of the croſs; ſince the only fame which he could obtain, would have been that of a falſifier, and deceiver; a deceiver too of his beſt friends. The caſe of Jeſus, indeed, ſtands diſtinguiſhed from the caſe of other claimants to the character of the Meſſiah, by the prophecies, which he repeatedly uttered, of his own reſurrection. And ſurely, the failure of thoſe prophecies, he muſt have foreſeen, would have overwhelmed even his memory with infamy. He would have ſhared, with other impoſtors, the danger of death; and he would have incurred, what other impoſtors did not incur, the aggravated reproach of not riſing again, according to his own repeated declarations.

There

There ſeem then to be no grounds whatſoever, for imputing to Jeſus any ſpecies of impoſture whatſoever.

WITH as little ſhadow of reaſon can the imputation of enthuſiaſm be fixed upon the character of Jeſus. Had he been an enthuſiaſt, and particularly be it obſerved, a Jewiſh enthuſiaſt, he would neceſſarily have carried the national pride, bigotry and ſuperſtition, to a greater height than the reſt of his countrymen. He would have been a ſtrenuous aſſertor of the perfection and immutability of the law of Moſes; his zeal would have been enflamed againſt the ſchiſmatical Samaritans, and the idolatrous Romans; he would have encouraged oppoſition to Cæſar; no charge of violating the law, of profaning the ſabbath, of hoſtility to the temple, would have been brought againſt him, and never would he have aſſociated with Publicans and ſinners.

I HAVE taken occaſion to remark the appearance of a variety of perſons, who falſely aſſumed the character of Prophets, about the time when Jeſus appeared; and the contraſt between *their* conduct and *his*, is undoubtedly favourable to his pretenſions as the true Meſſiah. It is remarkable, that the ſame age produced alſo a conſiderable number

number of perſons, againſt whom the charge of enthuſiaſm was, at the very time of their appearance, univerſally and properly alleged. Now, when we are endeavouring to diſcover, how far ſuch a principle can be juſtly aſcribed to Jeſus, it is ſurely reaſonable to examine, in what manner *they* conducted themſelves, upon whom the imputation has been caſt with juſtice and propriety. Such was the number of the perſons alluded to, and ſuch the uniformity of their principles and conduct, that they paſs under the well-known appellation of Zealots; and they are reckoned, by the Jewiſh hiſtorian, as a ſeparate and diſtinct ſect of his countrymen *. The leading principle of theſe men was exceſſive devotion to the law of Moſes, to the permanence of the Jewiſh religion, and the independence of the Jewiſh ſtate. They acknowledged no Maſter, but God †: and conſidered it as a crime to pay any tribute to the Romans, or to ſubmit in any way to the ignominy of a foreign and idolatrous yoke. When once they had adopted theſe principles, (which at firſt might be conſidered only as a national

* Joſeph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 1. ſect. 6. See Lardner's remarks upon this, Vol. I. p. 218.

† Baſnage, Hiſtoire des Juifs, Tom. I. partie 2. p. 492. 12mo. à la Haye, 1716.

a national way of thinking) as juſtifiable grounds of action; and had diſtinguiſhed themſelves from the reſt of the people, by their eagerneſs and zeal in manifeſting them, they were inſenſibly carried on to the perpetration of the moſt atrocious crimes, and at length precipitated the nation into the very ruin, which at firſt they vainly endeavoured to avert*.

THESE facts are inconteſtable; they are alſo perfectly natural. The fatal conſequences of this miſtaken zeal are exactly what might have been expected from the religious bigotry and national pride of the Jews, inflamed into action by an ardent enthuſiaſm in times of general difficulty and danger. But how different is the

* Il n'y eut point de crime, que ces gens-là ne commirent ſous prétexte de recouvrir la liberté, et de la procurer au peuple. Baſnage, ib. p. 494.

See Hammond on Matth. x. 4. and Newcome, pp. 231—233. See alſo ſome remarks on the licence allowed to Zealots, in the text and notes of Lardner, Vol. I. p. 60.

"The other part of a ſpiritual worſhip (ſays Jeremy Taylor) is a fervour and a holy zeal of God's glory, greatneſs of deſire, and quickneſs of action; of all this the Jews were not careful at all, excepting the *zealots* amongſt them, and they were not only fervent, but inflamed; and they had the earneſtneſs of *paſſion* for the holy *warmth* of *religion*; and inſtead of an earneſt *charity* they had a cruel *diſcipline*, and for fraternal *correction* they did *deſtroy* a ſinning Iſraelite: &c." ENIAYTOΣ, Serm. xii.

For this quotation I am indebted to the Notes upon Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon.

the conduct of theſe raſh zealots, theſe fiery enthuſiaſts, from *his*, who rebuked his diſciples, when they would have called down fire from Heaven upon the inhoſpitable Samaritans! from *his*, who, inſtead of promoting ſuch ſcenes of blood and devaſtation, wept over the miſeries, which this intemperate and miſguided zeal was bringing upon his country! from *his*, who was ſo far from acting in rebellion againſt Cæſar, under the pretence of conſulting the honour of God, that he publickly exhorted the Jews "to render under Cæſar the things which be Cæſar's, and unto God the things which be God's!" who preached a religion, which ſuperſeded the rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic law, rendered circumciſion inefficacious, and confounded the once vaunted diſtinction between Jew and Gentile! If a principle of enthuſiaſm for the religion of their fathers, if a devoted attachment to the honour of their nation, led the miſtaken Jews to ſuch enormous lengths of cruelty and phrenſy, while, in every action, they betrayed ſome ſymptom of the national prepoſſeſſion, how cautious ought we to be, whether we wiſh to be conſidered as candid, or as rational men, in fixing

fixing ſuch a ſtain upon the character of Jeſus, who, in the whole courſe of his life, in every word and in every action, pointedly and convincingly refuted it.

His conduct being the very oppoſite to that, which might have been expected from ſuch a principle of action, it is almoſt unneceſſary to appeal to the whole tenour of his precepts; which, however, are of themſelves ſufficient to repel the imputation of enthuſiaſm. Beſides, no character ever appeared in the world, upon which it would be ſo difficult to fix the charge of enthuſiaſm, as that of Jeſus Chriſt. Calm, diſpaſſionate and ſedate, he ſteadily purſued the great objects of his miſſion, amidſt the miſconceptions of his followers, and the oppoſition of his foes. In ſucceſs never elated, in diſcouragement never deſponding; in danger and in ſuffering equable and patient, neither in language, nor in conduct, does he betray the ungovernable warmth of fanaticiſm. If his indignation be awakened, it is mixed with pity; and the objects of it are thoſe perſons, who, if he had been a Jewiſh enthuſiaſt, would probably have obtained his commendation, the Scribes and Phariſees. Even in the tranſactions in the

temple, where he aſſumes the awful character of a Miniſter of Divine Vengeance, we obſerve and applaud the warmth of his zeal, but we cannot deſcry the extravagance of enthuſiaſm. Beſides, it is unlikely that a Jewiſh zealot would have diſcovered much to blame, and ſtill leſs to puniſh, in the proceedings of men, whoſe profeſſed object it was to accommodate the devout followers of the Moſaic law, and at the ſame time to ſhew their contempt for Gentile worſhippers, by making the place of their worſhip a place of Jewiſh merchandiſe *.

If

* This ſeeming act of violence bears a ſtronger appearance of enthuſiaſm, than any other recorded in the life of our Lord; but it is accompanied by peculiar circumſtances, which enable us, not merely to repel from it any vague charge of enthuſiaſm, but to ſhew the entire conſiſtency of it with the general ſcope of Chriſt's religion. The ſcene of the tranſaction was in the outer court of the temple, into which alone the Gentile proſelytes were admitted for the purpoſes of worſhip; and which therefore the Jews conſidered as much leſs holy than the inner court. Now our Lord, by driving out the Jews from this court, conveyed inſtruction by the indirect form of action. What was intimated by this action? That the Gentiles ſhould be admitted into the church. Perhaps a Gentile enthuſiaſt would have employed this mode of expreſſing his meaning—but Jeſus, if an enthuſiaſt at all, muſt be conſidered as a Jewiſh enthuſiaſt: and a Jewiſh enthuſiaſt would have adopted and encouraged all the national prejudices about the inferiour ſanctity of the outer court, and therefore would have acted in a manner preciſely the reverſe of that, in which Jeſus is ſaid to have acted. See Newcome's Obſervations on our Lord's Conduct, and

If then Jeſus Chriſt, as a mere Jew, had pretended to the character of a meſſenger from Heaven, actuated either by errour, or by fraud, his opinions and prejudices muſt, in all important points, have reſembled thoſe of his countrymen; and conſequently his ſcheme muſt have been the very reverſe of that, which the Goſpel really is. It muſt have correſponded with the miſtaken notions which we find to have prevailed, at that time, in every one of his countrymen, if we aſſign him the character of an enthuſiaſt: and even if we ſuppoſe him an impoſtor, ſuperiour to the narrow views and unreaſonable prejudices of the nation at large, ſtill the deſire of ſucceſs muſt have led him to fall in with their notions, and adopt their ſentiments.

The foregoing obſervations will enable us to place the pretenſions, and the character, of Jeſus in a diſtinct and accurate point of view. For if it was in the higheſt degree improbable, that any Jew whatſoever ſhould have conceived a ſcheme, ſo liberal and

and the paſſages referred to by him, p. 163. If (as ſome divines have thought) this tranſaction were miraculous, it would ſilence all diſputes about the *motives* of Jeſus. See Farmer on Demoniacs, p. 293. Note.

that rigid adherence to the ceremonial law, in which indeed the religion of the Jews at that time almoſt entirely conſiſted, and from which alone they aſſumed to themſelves ſo much merit. He aſſociated with Publicans and ſinners: and choſe, for the confidential miniſters of his high office, the moſt obſcure and illiterate of his countrymen. He inculcated ſubmiſſion to the Romans: he expreſſly aſſerted the rejection of the obſtinate Jews, and the admiſſion of the believing Gentiles to the privileges of his kingdom: he led the life of a poor deſtitute, not having where to lay his head: he expreſſed the moſt honeſt indignation againſt the rich, and the powerful; the interpreters of the law, and the leaders of the ſects. He repeatedly incurred the charge of violating the ſabbath, and of profaning the dignity of that proud object of their implicit reverence, the temple* at Jeruſalem. And finally, what is ſtill more extraordinary, as he excited the diſpleaſure of the Jews, by appearing in a manner inferiour to what they imagined beforehand, ſo he rouſed their indignation, by aſſuming pretenſions ſuperiour to what they expected. They expected the

* See Acts xxi. 28.

the Meſſiah to be a Prophet indeed, but not "The Holy One of God:" and therefore, when they heard the extent of his claims, they cried out, "By our law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God." So that in the eyes of this blind people, he ſeemed to add the outrage of inſult to the bitterneſs of diſappointment: though he ſeemed not to equal in dignity the meaneſt of the Prophets, he aſſerted his ſuperiority over Abraham; and though he failed to realize their groſs conceptions of the character of the Chriſt, he aſſumed the ſtill more extraordinary and more dignified title of the Son of God.

If any one, after viewing the deep root which national pride and prejudice had taken in the minds of the Jews, after examining the nature of the expectations they had formed, and the manner in which they were diſappointed, can ſtill conſider the rejection of Jeſus by the Jews as a matter incredible or unaccountable, he muſt have accuſtomed himſelf to view the relation of cauſe and effect with no very accurate eye. Certainly, it was impoſſible for him to appear in a way more contradictory to their expectations, and to propagate doctrines more

more diſtaſteful to their wiſhes. An enthuſiaſt could not conceive ſuch a ſcheme; an impoſtor could not adopt it; conſequently, the Goſpel, if preached by a Jew among the Jews, could not originate in human artifice or errour, but muſt have had it's ſource in the unſearchable wiſdom, and comprehenſive benevolence, of the Almighty Governour of the univerſe.

To confirm and elucidate theſe obſervations, I ſhall add the following paſſage from the works of a writer, whoſe elaborate and extenſive enquiries into the origin of our religion, have been eminently ſerviceable to the Chriſtian cauſe.

"THE expectation of the coming of the Meſſiah, about the time of the appearance of Jeſus, was univerſal, and had been ſo for ſome while. But with the idea of a Prophet, or extraordinary teacher of religion, they had joined alſo that of a worldly king or conqueror, who ſhould deliver the Jewiſh people from the burdens under which they laboured, raiſe them to a ſtate of independence, and bring the nations of the earth into ſubjection to them: and, becauſe our Lord did not perform or attempt this, they rejected and crucified him. If

he

he would but have aſſumed the ſtate and character of an earthly prince, Scribes and Phariſees, Prieſts and People, would have joined themſelves to him, and have put themſelves under his banner. Of this we ſee many proofs in the Goſpels. This diſpoſition prevailed to the laſt. The people therefore, though they had met with many diſappointments, when our Lord entered into Jeruſalem, in no greater ſtate than riding upon an aſs, accompanied him with loud acclamations, and other tokens of reſpect, ſaying, 'Hoſanna to the Son of David: Bleſſed is the King, that cometh in the name of the Lord.' And Jeſus, our Lord, not aſſuming then the character of an earthly prince, was a freſh diſappointment, and left deep reſentments; which rendered them ſuſceptible of the worſt impreſſions from the chief prieſts and their other rulers*. And at their inſtigation they

* If any one ſhould think this ſurpriſing change in the minds of the Jewiſh populace, too great to be accounted for upon the ſuppoſition of their diſappointment at our Saviour's conduct, the following conſiderations perhaps may reconcile him to the facts related in the Goſpels. From the accounts of the ſacred hiſtorians, it appears by no means neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that the perſons, who attended Jeſus in his triumphant entry into Jeruſalem, were the very ſame as thoſe,

they desired Pilate, the Roman governour, to set Barabbas at liberty, and crucify Jesus; with

who prevailed on the Roman governour to release Barabbas and to crucify Jesus. It is well known, that at the celebration of the passover, an astonishing number of Jews resorted to Jerusalem from all parts of the world; so many indeed, that, according to Josephus, those, who complied with that important rite of their religion, amounted to three millions of souls. (Joseph. Bell. Jud. L. ii. cap. 14. sect. 3. L. vi. 9. sect. 3.) Many of these, being strangers to what was passing in Judea, were very likely * to adopt implicitly the accounts of the priests and men in authority; and when they were told, that an impostor had appeared, who had gained considerable influence over the multitude, and was likely to exert that influence in opposition to the institutions of Moses, and the traditions of the elders, it is probable, they would easily be instigated to desire the death of the supposed impostor. Nor would such men hesitate in demanding the release of Barabbas, since they might be ignorant of the extent of his guilt; or be led (as bigotry and intolerance usually do lead men) to conceive, that even a robber and a murderer might be less criminal than an enemy to the existing religion; such as the King of the Jews was represented to be by his implacable enemies. We have therefore only to suppose, that the priests had procured a sufficient number of these men, as well as of their own immediate dependants, to fill the court of justice, and join in the importunate cry for Jesus' execution. And this supposition agrees very well with the circumstance of a crowd being assembled at the Prætorium so early in the morning †, since the apprehension of Jesus was

* Those, who were accustomed to travel so far in order to comply with the injunctions of the law, were not likely to be behindhand with their countrymen, in the veneration and attachment with which they regarded it. Indeed we have a notable instance of their violent and mistaken zeal in Acts, xxi. 27.

† For the time of these transactions, see Townson's very judicious Discourses &c. p. 250. I am happy also to find this writer concurring in the idea, that "the Jewish rulers had surrounded the tribunal with their followers and dependants." Ibid.

with which clamorous and importunate demand he at length complied, ſtill bearing teſtimony to the innocence of him, whom he unwillingly condemned.

" The continued expectation of the Meſſiah as a worldly king and conqueror, and

was conducted in a very ſecret manner, and known only to the chief prieſts, and thoſe whom they ſaw fit to acquaint with their deſigns. As to thoſe who had attended Jeſus into Jeruſalem, it is plain they were not informed of the place of his retirement; they were therefore diſperſed in the city, or in the fields adjacent to it. The buſineſs of the judicial examination was finiſhed in ſuch haſte, that if they had been diſpoſed to interfere, they had not time to concert any meaſures for that purpoſe. However, there is no reaſon to ſuppoſe, that any of the other followers of Jeſus would have intereſted themſelves in his behalf, ſince the very diſciples had forſaken him. They all acquieſced no doubt, though with ſorrow * and amazement, in the ſentence which was pronounced upon him: — but a mere acquieſcence is more probable, and more eaſy to be accounted for, than the brutal and outrageous act of compelling the governour to releaſe unto them a murderer, and conſign to a cruel death, one, who was ſo lately the object of their veneration †.

* See Luke xxiii. 27.

† The claſſical reader will not fail to call to mind the ſtriking deſcription of the change, produced in the expreſſion of the ſentiments of the Roman populace at the fall of Sejanus. See Juvenal, Sat. x. 67. 76. &c. But the change was only in the expreſſion of their ſentiments, ſince this inſolent favourite was as much the object of their real hatred, when in the height of his power, as in the degradation of his fall. The animated picture, drawn by the ſatyriſt, makes us ſome amends for the interruption, which time and accident have cauſed in the Annals of Tacitus, at this very intereſting period of hiſtory. Yet Brotier has caught ſucceſsfully the manner of his original. Supplem. ad Lib. V. Annal. capp. xxiv. xxxviii.

and their uneaſineſs under the Roman yoke, were the immediate occaſions of their rebelling againſt the authority, to which they were then ſubject; and the ſame principles that induced them to reject and crucify Jeſus, brought upon them their utter and final deſtruction." Lardner, Vol. vii. p. 60.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER III.

ON THE CONDUCT OF THE DISCIPLES.

How far the Diſciples reſembled their countrymen.—Who they were.—Addreſs of Jeſus to them after they were choſen.—Their ignorance of their Maſter's real office, and diſtruſt of his power.—Conduct at the transfiguration.—Diſpoſition to interpret the prophecies literally.—Candid repreſentation of their own conduct, a proof of their veracity.—Diſputes, who ſhould be the greateſt.—Triumphant entry of Jeſus Chriſt into Jeruſalem.—The laſt ſupper.—The garden.—Apprehenſion of Jeſus.—Sentiments and conduct of the Diſciples at that event.—Circumſtances attending the reſurrection.—Diſciples at length convinced, boldly preach a crucified Meſſiah.—How this change is to be accounted for.—Some remnant of their old prejudices and miſtakes.—Converſion of Cornelius.—Reflections upon that event.—Edict of the council at Jeruſalem.—Concluſion warranted by theſe facts, and others harmonizing with them.

FROM the deep root which national prepoſſeſſions had taken among the Jews, and from the nature of their expectations concerning the Meſſiah, it ceaſes to appear extraordinary, that ſo large a portion of the nation ſhould diſregard, or diſbelieve, the credentials produced by Jeſus in favour of his divine commiſſion. It ſeems, however, neceſſary

neceſſary to inquire into the conduct of thoſe perſons, who formed ſo ſingular an exception to the generality of their countrymen; by not only readily admitting the teſtimony of Jeſus, but by perſevering, in ſpite of every diſcouragement, and every danger, to preach to the world at large the doctrines, which Jeſus had taught. The motives which ſhall appear, upon ſtrict inquiry, to have directed their conduct, muſt aſſiſt us in determining how far the Goſpel is true: and if their actions ſhall be conformable to what might be expected from men in their peculiar circumſtances; and if they ſhall themſelves be found capable of forming a right judgement of the facts, to which they bore witneſs, and actuated by no wrong bias whatſoever; we cannot refuſe their evidence, as credible and competent witneſſes.

Now we ſhould naturally expect, at firſt, to meet the ſame ſort of opinions, and prejudices, in theſe men, as in their countrymen. We ſhould expect that theſe opinions would occaſionally appear, and theſe prejudices often ſtart forth. We ſhould expect to obſerve marks of diſappointment, when their worldly and carnal views of the Meſſiah

ſiah were diſcountenanced, and their own hopes, founded upon thoſe wrong conceptions, baffled and cruſhed. We ſhould expect to find theſe deeply-rooted prepoſſeſſions gradually and ſlowly worn out of their minds, by the indubitable proofs, which Jeſus gave, of his being really the character, which he profeſſed to be: we ſhould expect to ſee them often returning to the charge, as it were, and then retiring at ſome freſh exertion of miraculous power; riſing again into full ſtrength, when any event occurred, which might ſeem to confound all their expectations; and not completely ſubdued, till after a ſeries of divine agency, which no preconceived opinions whatſoever could poſſibly withſtand. In ſhort, we ſhould expect to find them reſembling the reſt of their countrymen, except in the opportunities they had of obſerving more narrowly the character and works of Jeſus, and in having diſpoſitions, not ſo inveterately hoſtile to every ſpecies of evidence.

THESE, doubtleſs, would be our expectations; and if, in the accounts, which are left of the conduct of the more immediate followers of Jeſus, we meet with theſe marks

marks of truth and of nature, we are bound, in reaſon and in equity, to receive their recorded teſtimony.

BEFORE we enter upon a minute examination of their conduct, we may obſerve that Jeſus, in the choice of his diſciples does not appear to have been influenced by the circumſtance of neighbourhood or affinity. One of them, indeed, is called his brother (which is the term for a couſin*, near or remote); but many of the others appear to have been total ſtrangers to him, till they were induced, from what they ſaw or heard, to pay a more earneſt attention to his diſcourſes, and to become the attendants upon his miniſtry. It is moreover remarkable, that the generality of his kinſmen†, as well as his neighbours, appear to have diſputed his right to the title of Meſſias. When his friends heard of his aſſuming the public office of a teacher, it is expreſſly mentioned, that "they went out to lay hold on him: for they ſaid, he is beſide

* This uſe of the term was not confined to Judea. Ajax, ſpeaking of Achilles, ſays,

Frater erat: fraterna peto. Ovid. Metam. xiii. 31.

† Bp. Law has ſome very ſagacious obſervations upon this ſubject, in a note to his Reflections on the Life and Character of Chriſt. Vid. p. 304. Edit. 6.

beſide himſelf." We are alſo told that his "brethren," or relations, "did not believe in him;" and on account of the ill reception, which he met with amongſt his neighbours, he has recorded his own conviction of the accuracy of the obſervation, that a "prophet has no honour in his own country*."

FROM the number of thoſe perſons, who were in the habit of attending him, when he aſſumed the office of a public teacher, we are told that Jeſus†, after ſpending the night in prayer, ſelected twelve, as the more peculiar and confidential witneſſes of his life, and doctrine. With the motives of his choice we are not made acquainted‡; but all parties will agree, that he ſelected thoſe, whom he thought moſt fit for his purpoſe. Certain however it is, he did not feed their ambitious hopes with any alluring promiſes, or entice them with any tempting offers; ſince the diſcourſe he addreſſed to them, immediately after they were choſen, was only calculated

* Vid. Mark iii. 21. John vii. 5. Matth. xiii. 57. and Luke iv. 24—29.

† Luke vi. 12, 13.

‡ See the choice of ſuch men, as the fitteſt attendants upon the Divine miniſtry of our Saviour, vindicated by Bp. Law, Reflections, p. 282, &c.

calculated to alarm their prejudices, and to damp their expectations *. He announces their impending perſecution; reproves worldly anxieties; rebukes the hypocriſy, and foretells the puniſhment, of thoſe, to whom they looked up as patterns of religious and moral perfection; and in expreſs terms, warns his followers of the extreme difficulty of performing the duties, and attaining the rewards, of his diſpenſation. We are not told that this diſcourſe produced any effect upon the diſciples; it is probable they were far from having a clear conception of it's import; as indeed their ignorance †, added to their prejudices, incapacitated them from comprehending much of what our Saviour told them, relative to his kingdom, during his life-time. Undoubtedly their faith in him was very far from being ſettled at this early

* Luke vi. 20—22. Matt. v. 10, 11. and in general, the whole ſermon on the mount. See alſo c. x. 16, &c.

† This ignorance is far from being denied by the Apoſtles, or their hiſtorians. St. Luke plainly admits, that Peter and John were "unlearned and ignorant men." Acts iv. 13. and the other Evangeliſts, as well as St. Luke, repeatedly adduce inſtances of the dulneſs of their apprehenſion, particularly concerning the real nature of their maſter's character and kingdom. See particularly Matt. xv. 16. Mark viii. 15—21. x. 26. Luke ix. 54. xviii. 34. xix. 9—11. John ii. 22. iv. 27—33. vi. 6. x. 6. xi. 12. xii. 16. xx. 9, 25.

early period, ſince, very ſoon after, they betrayed the moſt alarming apprehenſions of periſhing, even when their maſter was with them *. "And he ſaith unto them, why are fearful, O ye of little faith!"

NOTWITHSTANDING it is recorded by the ſacred hiſtorian, that Jeſus had given his diſciples abundant proof of his miraculous powers, and had even, for a time, imparted a ſhare to them †, yet we read, in the 14th and 15th chapters of St. Matthew, ſome notable inſtances of their diſtruſt and doubts, concerning the extent of his preternatural endowments. And upon theſe and other circumſtances, which are related, freely and without diſguiſe, concerning the miraculous acts to which they were witneſſes, it is obvious to remark, that, if the writers of theſe accounts had been conſcious of a deſign to fabricate, or propagate falſehoods, yet no poſſible reaſon can be given, why they ſhould accompany the narrations with an acknowledgment of their own incredulity.

IN

* Compare Luke viii. 23. with Matt. viii. 26.

† This poſition will be maintained, and the ſubject diſcuſſed, in the following chapter.

In the 16th chapter of the ſame Evangeliſt*, it appears to be intimated, that all the diſciples had not fully aſcertained, in their own minds, what was the real character of their Maſter: ſince only one†, in reply to his queſtion upon that point, deſcribed him by his true deſignation. But immediately afterwards, that ſame Apoſtle ſhewed his utter ignorance of the nature of that deſignation, and the entire coincidence of his notions, with thoſe of his countrymen, when, in direct oppoſition to a plain declaration of Jeſus, concerning his impending ſufferings and death, he replied in a tone of impatience and incredulity: "Be it far from thee, Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee." A tranſaction is related to have taken place ſoon after, which drew forth

* In this inveſtigation, I have adhered to the order of time obſerved by St. Matthew, as he is generally ſuppoſed to be more accurate in this reſpect, than the others. And, as all the Evangeliſts agree perfectly in the general repreſentation of the conduct of the Apoſtles, in adhering principally to one, I repreſent the ſenſe of all, and gain the advantage of purſuing the inquiry through a more unbroken ſeries of facts. Mr. Whiſton indeed objects to the order obſerved by St. Matthew, but his objections are refuted by the learned and ſagacious Mr. Jones, of Tewkſbury.

† That Peter, in this inſtance, haſtily gave his own opinion, and not that of the other diſciples, appears to me clear, from the particular and pointed addreſs of our Lord to him in reply: "Fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto *thee*," &c.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

forth again, from ſome of the choſen followers, a freſh proof of their miſtaken and ambitious views. It is ſaid, that he was transfigured before three of his diſciples: "and his face did ſhine as the ſun, and his raiment was white as the light;" as an earneſt of his future glory, and as affording ſome idea of his real grandeur, notwithſtanding the humiliated ſtate in which he appeared upon earth. Then did his friends, who were permitted to be witneſſes of this circumſtance, begin to think that their ambitious hopes were realized, their aſpirations after the Meſſiah's kingdom gratified. And upon this occaſion, they ſhewed the moſt evident marks of exultation, and expreſſed the moſt anxious deſire to have the beatific ſcene prolonged. Peter, who was again the moſt eager to attract the attention of his Maſter, and who here undoubtedly expreſſed the ſentiments of his aſſociates*, as well as his own, exclaimed in the language of warm ſelf-congratulation: "Maſter, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three

* This, I think, is apparent, not only from the circumſtances which had taken place, but alſo from the mode of his addreſs: "It is good for *us* to be here; let *us* make" &c.—Lightfoot's note upon this paſſage is excellent.

three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moſes, and one for Elias."

It is ſingular, that this is the only expreſſion of ſatisfaction, which is recorded as having fallen from the mouth of the diſciples, during the miniſtry of Jeſus. We find they were often perplexed, and often diſtruſtful; ſometimes diſheartened, then anxiouſly enquiring for the time of their recompenſe; but we never obſerve any mark of complete contentment or delight, except upon this occaſion *. This behaviour is perfectly conſiſtent with nature, ſuppoſing the Goſpel true; but upon any other ſuppoſition, it is moſt difficult to conceive, that the circumſtance ſhould be invented and told ſo naturally, or indeed for what purpoſe it could be invented at all. But to proceed with our enquiry.

Immediately after this tranſporting proſpect of future enjoyment, their thoughts are fixed upon the time, when it ſhould be realized; and, in a queſtion, which ſtrongly marks their dependence, on the authority of their earthly inſtructors, combined with a reve-

* See however, Luke x. 17. That inſtance, which is certainly ſimilar to the fact here conſidered, is to be accounted for upon preciſely the ſame principles.

a reverence for the character of their Maſter, they wiſh to have a doubt reſolved, which the late occurrence ſhould ſeem to have ſuggeſted, or, at leaſt, called up more directly in their minds; "Why then ſay the Scribes, that Elias muſt firſt come?" And upon this queſtion being anſwered to their ſatisfaction, then, and not till then, we are told, that the diſciples underſtood the real character, and office, of John the Baptiſt.

THE proof* that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, was certainly connected very cloſely, in the apprehenſion of the Jews, with the perſon and conduct of the prophet, his fore-runner; yet, we ſee, the Evangeliſt readily acknowledges, that the confidential friends of Jeſus were not acquainted with the real character of John, until the time allotted to their Maſter's miniſtry had nearly expired: and this too, notwithſtanding an expreſs declaration from him, ſome time before; accompanied indeed with a doubt, whether the

* This proof is detailed by Dr. Bell, in a volume, replete with accurate inveſtigation, and ſound argument, entitled, "An inquiry into the Divine Miſſion of John the Baptiſt, and Jeſus Chriſt, &c." 2d Edit. 1795. The appearance of ſome ſuch perſonage, "in the ſpirit and power of Elias," was conſidered by the Jews as ſo eſſential to the miſſion of their Meſſiah, that, when Barchocheba aſſumed that character, he ſelected the famous Rabbi Akiba as his precurſor. See Mod. Univ. Hiſt. Vol. X. p. 437.

the minds of the diſciples were ſufficiently enlightened to underſtand or believe it*. This again ſhews their diſpoſition to interpret the prophecies literally †, and the doubts that conſtantly hung over their minds, whether their Maſter were really the Meſſiah, or no. On the one hand, it is unlikely they ſhould make no ſcruple of declaring, that they had ſo long been ignorant of the character of the Baptiſt, if they had been concerned in a trick; and if they had been the dupes of their Maſter's artifice, the previous coming of John the Baptiſt, would have been the firſt thing he would have inculcated upon their minds; ſince

* Vid. Matt. xi. 14. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

† Upon this ſubject let us hear the eminently learned Glaſs. Quòd ſi verò tropicus et figuratus ſermo propriè fuit aliquando intellectus, abſurdiſſimarum opinionum monſtra id ipſum peperit, ut ex iis, quæ ſubjiciam, exemplis, manifeſtum erit. In ipſâ Chriſti, ὁμοιοπαθὴς in his terris nobis facti, ſcholâ familiari et domeſticâ, ruditatem diſcipulorum ejus, et præconceptam, de regno Chriſti terreno, opinionem; inter alia, ortum ex eo ſumſiſſe certum eſt quòd vaticinia Prophetarum, quibus illi regnum Meſſiæ magnificè admodùm deſcribunt, et ad illuſtrandam amplitudinem ejus ſpiritualem, metaphoris ab externorum regnorum mundi conditione deſumtis utuntur, ut propriè, dicta, cum reliquo Judæorum vulgo, intellexerunt: qui error, quàm fixè animis ipſorum inſederit, et quàm difficultèr eradicari ab ipſomet veritatis doctore potuerit, hiſtoria Evangelica ſatis apertè commonſtrat. Philologia Sacra. Francof. et Hamburg. 1653. Præfat. in lib. V. ſeu, Rhetor. Sacram.

ſince the Jews believed it to be plainly declared in the prophecies, that "Elias muſt firſt come, and reſtore all things." Inſtead of which, we find that it was only at the very concluſion of his miniſtry, and then incidentally, that the choſen followers of Jeſus, became perſuaded of the truth of an event, which, in their minds, was neceſſarily to take place, before any one could eſtabliſh his claim to the title of Meſſias.

SUBSEQUENT to the converſation abovementioned, there enſued a ſtriking proof of the diſtruſt entertained by the diſciples concerning the reality, or the extent, of the power, with which Jeſus had inveſted them, and conſequently concerning his ability to beſtow it. A ſevere rebuke* of their unbelief is alſo recorded. This is perfectly conſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, that the diſciples, finding their Maſter's character and conduct very different from what their interpretations of the prophecies, and the general expectations, led them to imagine, frequently allowed themſelves to give way to doubts and ſuſpicions concerning him. When, however, thoſe doubts and ſuſpicions

* Matt. xvii. 20. Mark ix. 19.

picions were completely removed in conſequence of his reſurrection, it is natural enough, that they ſhould record them, as having once exiſted. But if they had been leagued with an impoſtor, they could never have entertained any doubts; and even if we can ſuppoſe them to have been at firſt deceived, and afterwards to have joined in carrying on the deception;—if we look upon them as having been at firſt the dupes, and afterwards the accomplices, of a fraud;—ſtill, when they had once reſolved to act, as if they had no doubt upon the ſubject, a plauſible reaſon cannot be aſſigned, why they ſhould publiſh their former ſuſpicions to the world. In a word, it ſeems to me in the higheſt degree improbable, that the narrative of the Evangeliſts ſhould have appeared in it's preſent form, unleſs the facts, there related, be truly repreſented. Every circumſtance may be accounted for, every part of the ſtory harmonizes, if we admit theſe facts:—if we deny them, we are involved in difficulty and perplexity, and the whole conduct of Jeſus and his aſſociates is moſt inexplicable.

" At the ſame time (proceeds the Evangeliſt) came the diſciples unto Jeſus, ſaying, Who

Who is the greateſt in the kingdom of heaven* ? "

THIS circumſtance occurs very naturally, after the account given of the transfiguration, in the preceding chapter. The thoughts of the diſciples, at leaſt of thoſe, who were admitted to the viſionary ſcene of ſplendour, were turned to the ſpeedy realizing of it; eſpecially as they found, that the fore-runner of the Meſſiah was already arrived. Whether or no they communicated that tranſaction to the other diſciples, it is natural, that the converſation of all ſhould turn on the ſpeedy approach of the Meſſiah's reign. And it is equally natural, that it ſhould be a matter of anxious debate and frequent enquiry among them, who ſhould fill the higheſt offices in this future kingdom;—which ſhould be the greateſt favourite of their Maſter, when he ſhould aſſume the name, and exerciſe the authority, of a temporal ruler. It is alſo likely, that the three, who had been admitted to ſuch a mark of their maſter's confidence, ſhould affect to lord it over the reſt; and it is by no means an improbable ſuppoſition, made by

* Matth. xviii, 1.

by a learned commentator *, that ſome among them, ſuch as St. Matthew, becauſe they had exerciſed a diſreputable occupation, or were of meaner parts than the reſt, had been too much undervalued and deſpiſed by their aſſociates. At all events, the queſtion ſhews plainly their ambitious views and their worldly ideas reſpecting the reign of the Meſſiah; and it correſponds accurately with the prevailing notions of their countrymen on that head. The rebuke, which they received, is no leſs conſiſtent with the real character, and uniform conduct, of the true Meſſiah: but was little calculated to feed the hopes, or indulge the prejudices, of his worldly followers.

STILL, however, this rebuke did not correct their miſtaken notions: ſince, upon a ſubſequent occaſion, when Jeſus ſaid to his diſciples, "That a rich man ſhall with difficulty enter into the kingdom of heaven †," they could not refrain from expreſſing their aſtoniſhment at a declaration, ſo pointedly hoſtile to all their prepoſſeſſions. "They were exceedingly amazed, and ſaid, Who then can be ſaved?" That the rich and the powerful, ſo far from enjoying

* Vid. Weſten. ad loc. † Matth. xix. 23.

joying ſuperiour privileges and diſtinctions in the kingdom, that was to be ſet up, ſhould even be generally excluded, was a paradox, which they could not explain: and which indeed could not be explained, if the kingdom, to which Jeſus alluded, had been of a nature and kind, ſimilar to that, which the diſciples expected,—a kingdom of worldly grandeur and temporal happineſs. Their impatience to know ſomething, with more certainty, reſpecting their own deſtiny, could not any longer be reſtrained; and, upon this occaſion, Jeſus, though he explained not the nature of their miſtake, yet condeſcended to encourage their hopes in ambiguous, yet cheering, terms. Notwithſtanding the erroneous notions, by which they were led away in common with the nation at large, notwithſtanding the ambitious hopes, in which they ſo eagerly indulged, yet they had ſhewn a diſpoſition of mind far ſuperiour to that of their countrymen. They had, as far as the prejudices of education, and the ſtrong bias of habit would allow, given a convincing proof of their reliance upon Jeſus, and their attachment to him; they had "forſaken all, and followed him." Upon this occaſion, therefore,

fore, he manifeſts his ſenſe of that attachment, and promiſes to reward it, though in a way, of which they had no diſtinct conception. He adapted his language to their national ideas, and declared, " Verily, I ſay unto you, that ye, which have followed me, in the *Regeneration*, when the Son of Man ſhall ſit upon the throne of his glory, ye alſo ſhall ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Iſrael! * "

In the twentieth chapter, after he had again ſolemnly warned them of the fate, which awaited himſelf, we find a freſh inſtance of the ſtrong hold, which ſecular conſiderations had taken upon the minds of his followers and their friends. The mother of two of his diſciples came with her ſons, to intreat that they might be promoted to the two greateſt offices in the kingdom, which ſhe conceived, (particularly from his late declaration), that he would ſhortly eſtabliſh. When the other diſciples heard it, they conceived an indignation, as in their circumſtances

* Upon this paſſage, the phraſeology of which is highly oriental, conſult Lightfoot and Roſenmüller. The latter commentator is, generally ſpeaking, an excellent interpreter of the language of the New Teſtament, but, like many other ſcholars upon the Continent, he is too fond of reducing every thing to the level of ordinary occurrence and common apprehenſion.

cumſtances it was probable they would, againſt the brothers, who had endeavoured to thruſt themſelves into an higher degree of their Maſter's favour, and to ſecure a greater ſhare of worldly elevation, than themſelves. Upon this occaſion, Jeſus again endeavoured to make them underſtand, that his kingdom was to be eſſentially different from the kingdoms of the world; and that humility, and mutual benevolence, would be indiſpenſable requiſites for attaining any pre-eminence in that, over which he was to preſide.

AFTER his triumphant entry into Jeruſalem; with the exception of one rebuke *, which they incurred, for not placing ſufficient reliance on the extent of his power; they were ſo elevated by the manner, in which he was received, and by the uncontrolled authority, which he exerciſed, that they liſtened to his declarations of the impending deſtruction of the holy city with implicit faith; and privately enquired of him, when theſe things ſhould take place, and what ſhould be the ſign of his coming †.

IN

* Matth. xxi. 20. † Matth. xxiv. 3.

In this frame of mind they continued, till the inſtant in which he was delivered, as a criminal, into the hands of his enemies. The plain intimations of his approaching fate they received with wonder and incredulity; and ſo ſtrong did they feel their attachment, and ſo ardent their zeal; that, when he told them how ſoon they would be *offended**, and all forſake him, they thought it impoſſible; and they aſſerted, in the moſt poſitive terms, their reſolution to encounter every danger in his cauſe, and for his ſake.

Their conduct in the garden, is the conduct of men, ſurpriſed at what they ſaw going forward, yet ignorant of what it meant, and to what it tended. The intimations of Jeſus, concerning his approaching ſufferings, they doubtleſs conceived to be deſigned as a trial of their attachment; which late tranſactions (particularly the transfiguration, and his triumphant entry into Jeruſalem, announcing, as they appeared to do, the ſpeedy

* This word is much too confined and weak in it's ſignification, to expreſs the full meaning of σκανδαλίζω. Schoettgen, in his Novum Lexicon, Lipſ. 1790. explains σκανδαλισθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ, arreptâ aliquâ occaſione è Chriſti perſonâ, religione, aut regno, aliiſve, quoquo modo ei adhærentibus, fieri ab eo alieniorem, aut etiam planè deficere.

ſpeedy confirmation of their darling hopes,) had ſo rivetted, that they did not feel it poſſible for any circumſtance to ſhake or alter it; ſince they did not now feel it poſſible, that Jeſus could have any other character, than what their own minds repreſented, as belonging to the Meſſiah. When therefore a band of ſoldiers, greatly ſuperiour to themſelves in number, appeared in the garden with hoſtile intentions againſt Jeſus, ſuch reliance did they place upon his power, ſo little doubt did they entertain, but that he was able, and willing, to extricate both himſelf and them from the impending danger, that one of their number, Peter, ſtill the moſt forward and impatient, "drew his ſword, and ſtruck a ſervant of the high prieſt, and ſmote off his right ear*."

But when, to their utter aſtoniſhment, their Maſter made no reſiſtance whatſoever, but ſubmitted quietly to the power of his enemies, and was led away to be interrogated and puniſhed as a malefactor, his diſciples, who could not reconcile this with their opinions of the Meſſiah, nor with the former inſtances of power, which Jeſus had exerted,

* Matth. xxvi. 51. John xviii. 10.

exerted, now found their ardour ſink in the ſame proportion, in which it had before been excited: — thoſe very men, who had lately been ſo bold and eager in their profeſſions of zeal, all "forſook him and fled;" and he, who had been more loud and confident than the reſt in his proteſtations, and more active in the defence of a maſter, whom he thought capable of defending himſelf, thrice publickly denied his knowledge of a man, for whom, and with whom, he had ſo lately ſworn to die*.

SURELY this is a natural picture of a miſtaken and worldly zeal! Warm and impetuous in it's profeſſions of ſervice, no ſooner does it diſcover it's errour reſpecting the ſource of it's warmth, than it is equally ready to forſake and abandon the former object of it's attachment. Peter and the other diſciples confounded their hopes of honour and emolument from a Meſſiah, ſuch as their own ideas repreſented, with affection to the perſon of Jeſus: they conceived they had ſeen ſuch proofs of his being the character they expected, that no room was left in their imaginations for the poſſibility of a diſappointment. Not being able

* Vid. Matth. xxvi. 35, 56, 74.

able to reconcile preſent appearances with their former notions, in a moment of ſurpriſe and diſmay, they ſuffered their prejudiced and ſelfiſh views to prevail againſt their experience and their conviction; and, becauſe they did not underſtand how the Meſſiah could be ſubjected to the power of men, they yielded to the impreſſions of fear and ſuſpicion, and no longer conceived him to be, what he had declared himſelf, and what they themſelves had believed.

THEY continued in this ſtate of mind, in ſtupid ſurpriſe and abject deſpondency, without making any effort for the preſervation, or at all ſtepping forward to vindicate the character, of their once venerated Lord, till they ſaw him actually put to death, and conſigned to the grave. They were unable to reconcile the facts, to which they had been eye-witneſſes, with the humiliated ſituation, and ignominious death, of Jeſus. They knew not how to account for the marvellous proofs of ſupernatural agency, which they had ſeen him diſplay, upon any principle, which would harmonize with that fancied want of power, and of means to

extricate himſelf from the violence of his enemies, to which alone they conceived his ſubmiſſion owing, at the time of his apprehenſion. They underſtood not, for what purpoſe the Meſſiah was to undergo ſuch accumulated ſufferings; nor could they conceive, how it was poſſible he ſhould fulfil the ends of his miſſion by undergoing them. They had ſeen ſuch ſtriking proofs of benevolence, and of every virtue, in his character, that they knew not how to ſuſpect him of being a deceiver; although they felt that they were themſelves deceived. To his character they retained an attachment, although it was not ſufficiently ſtrong to induce them to ſupport his cauſe, under circumſtances ſo alarming, and ſo unexpected: and as to his promiſe of returning again to life, either it did not occur to them, or they remembered it only as a dream, the recollection of which might pleaſe their fancy, though they would not delude themſelves, by aſſuming that it would be realized. In this ſtate of their minds, how ſtrikingly natural is the incident recorded by St. Luke *, concerning the

* Cap. xxiv. 13—35.

the two diſciples, who walked into the country, after ſome rumour of the reſurrection had reached their ears! How ſuited to men, in their circumſtances of doubt prevailing over hope, is the impreſſive exclamation, "We truſted that it had been he, which ſhould have delivered Iſrael!" Conſiſtently with theſe ideas, how agreeable to probability are the heſitation and diſtruſt of all, reſpecting the actual reſurrection of Chriſt, and the obſtinate diſbelief of Thomas, till he had ſatisfied himſelf by the evidence of his ſenſes.

The account, however, which is given by the ſacred hiſtorians of the manner, in which this ſtupendous event was accompliſhed, deſerves our particular notice.

Some women, we are told, who had conſtantly attended Jeſus during his miniſtry; who had liſtened to his precepts, and were acquainted with his predictions; went to the ſepulchre in the morning, on which the reſurrection is ſaid to have taken place; not indeed to ſee whether he was riſen, as had been predicted—ſuch a thought appears not to have occurred to them—but to embalm his body, and pay him the reſpect and honours, uſually performed to the dead.

dead. "Now upon the firſt day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the ſepulchre, bringing the ſpices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the ſtone rolled away from the ſepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jeſus. And it came to paſs, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men ſtood by them in ſhining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they ſaid unto them, Why ſeek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; but is riſen: remember how he ſpake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, ſaying, The Son of man muſt be delivered into the hands of ſinful men, and be crucified, and the third day riſe again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the ſepulchre, and told all theſe things unto the eleven, and to all the reſt. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told theſe things unto the Apoſtles. And their words ſeemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then aroſe Peter, and ran unto the ſepulchre; and,

and, ſtooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themſelves, and departed, wondering in himſelf at that which was come to paſs*." "Now when Jeſus was riſen early, the firſt day of the week, he appeared firſt to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had caſt ſeven demons. And ſhe went, and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been ſeen of her, believed not. After that, he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the reſidue, neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven, as they ſat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardneſs of heart, becauſe they believed not them, which had ſeen him after he was riſen†." "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them, when Jeſus came. The other diſciples therefore ſaid unto him, We have ſeen the Lord. But he ſaid unto them, Except I ſhall ſee in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and

* Luke xxiv. 1—12. † Mark xvi. 9—14.

and thruſt my hand into his ſide, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his diſciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jeſus, the doors being ſhut, and ſtood in the midſt, and ſaid, Peace be unto you. Then ſaith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thruſt it into my ſide; and be not faithleſs, but believing. And Thomas anſwered, and ſaid unto him, My Lord and my God. Jeſus ſaith unto him, Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed; bleſſed are they, that have not ſeen, and yet have believed *."

If a candid man will carefully peruſe the whole of theſe accounts, he will, I think, find them ſtamped with the ſtrongeſt marks of truth. He will diſcover the behaviour of theſe followers of Jeſus, to be ſuited to the extraordinary circumſtances, in which they were placed. Admitting the truth of the ſtory, he will find it a plain, artleſs, and conſiſtent narrative.—If he ſuſpect or deny the fact, which ſo clearly illuſtrates, and exactly tallies with, their conduct, ſurely it is in the higheſt degree inconceivable,

* John xx. 24—29.

inconceivable, that the Evangeliſts could have any reaſon for wiſhing to invent ſuch an account, or, humble as their talents, and their knowledge confeſſedly were, that they ſhould have the ability to invent it.

Let us now conſider the manner, in which theſe deſerters of their Maſter; who forſook him in the moſt trying moment, and ſolemnly denied their knowledge of him, at a criſis, when, if at any time, their ſupport muſt have ſeemed to themſelves uſeful and acceptable; let us, I ſay, conſider the manner, in which they conducted themſelves, after he was put to death; after the ambitious hopes they had formed, were entirely extinguiſhed; after the notions and expectations they had entertained of the character and power of the Meſſiah, in common with their countrymen, were completely and cruelly outraged.

In a ſhort ſpace of time, we find theſe very men leading a life, and adopting a conduct, ſuitable only to thoſe, who were entirely ſatisfied that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah. They aſſert upon their own knowledge, that he had riſen from the dead, and they expoſe themſelves to contumely, danger and death, in proclaiming publickly that

fact, as well as in bearing witneſs to the miraculous actions of their Maſter, during his life*. And it is obſervable, that the very perſon, who had denied and abandoned his maſter in a more ſolemn and publick manner than the reſt †, was, after this interval of time, more bold and active in impreſſing upon the minds of others, his great qualities, and high character; as if anxious to make amends, by ſubſequent zeal, for former incredulity.

Now ſurely it is extremely difficult, if not entirely impoſſible, to deviſe any reaſon for this change of ſentiment, and of conduct, except we admit, that the diſciples really believed the truth of what they taught. And as they aſſerted theſe extraordinary facts, not upon the authority of others, but upon the repeated evidence of their own ſenſes, in matters, where their ſenſes could not

* Vid. Acts ii. 22. iii. 13. iv. 10, 33. vii. 52. x. 38. xiii. 30. xvii. 3, 31. xviii. 5, 28. xx. 21. xxvi. 23.

† How delicately, yet how pointedly, does his maſter allude to St. Peter's warm profeſſions of ſuperiour attachment, and to his more conſpicuous apoſtacy. "Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me *more* than than theſe?" Compare John xxi. 15. with Mark xiv. 29. and Luke xxii. 33. Surely characters ſupported with ſuch uniform conſiſtency, and occurrences ſo minutely detailed, demand our unqualified aſſent. Such incidental traits as theſe, ſpeak more ſtrongly to the accuracy of a narrative, than the moſt laboured deſcriptions, or the moſt artificial arrangement.

not be deceived, I am unable to comprehend, how it can be practicable to evade the concluſion, that what they affirmed was true.

THE diſciples, it is evident, muſt know, whether Jeſus really roſe from the dead, or not. They had no temptation to aſſert the fact, if it had been untrue: and they had ſhewn by their conduct before his death, and immediately after it, that if they had been miſtaken or deceived in his character, they had not the courage, or the inclination, to defend and ſupport it. Doubtleſs, from their behaviour at that period, it may be fairly inferred, that they were not inſenſible to the impulſe of worldly, and ambitious motives; but ſtill we ſhould by no means be juſtified in concluding from thoſe facts, that they would have countenanced an *impoſture*, in order to promote ſuch ends. Yet, upon any other ſuppoſition than that of their conviction that Jeſus had actually and indeed riſen from the grave, we muſt believe that theſe men voluntarily expoſed themſelves to diſgrace, pain, and even death*, for the ſake of ſupporting a lie: although they had given the cleareſt proof, that the fear

* Vid. Acts v. 41. xv. 26.

fear of theſe worldly evils had prevented them from bearing teſtimony to the *truth*, and defending the character of a man, whom they really revered.

INCONSISTENCY like this, without any aſſignable motive, nay, when every viſible motive lay the contrary way, cannot be admitted to be probable; and when, by the eaſy conceſſion of believing theſe recorded truths, all theſe difficulties are immediately ſolved, is it not the duty of every ſerious inquirer, to relax from the pride and obſtinacy of ſcepticiſm, and, in a ſtrain of humble and grateful acknowledgement, to admit the interference of God?

STILL however the marks of truth, which may ſo plainly be traced by a minute examination of the apoſtles' conduct, have not been wholly enumerated. Upon points which the evidence of their ſenſes had not reached, and when they thought it not inconſiſtent with their fixed belief that Jeſus was the true Meſſiah, we find, long after the reſurrection, ſtrong indications of the prejudices, which they had formerly entertained. It was ſtill ſome time before they could fully comprehend, that the Gentiles were to be admitted to the privileges of the Goſpel,

Goſpel, without previous ſubmiſſion to the rites of the Moſaic law; that the ordinances of that law were become ſuperfluous; and that the partition wall* between the Jews and other nations was *entirely* to be broken down.

A REMARKABLE inſtance of adherence to the miſtaken opinions, which time and habit had ſo ſtrongly riveted, occurs in the conduct of that diſciple, to whom we have had ſuch frequent occaſion to allude.

ST. PETER, we are told, was inſtructed in a viſion, that the diſtinct and peculiar inſtitutions of the Moſaic law were henceforth to be diſpenſed with; yet the doctrine was ſo ſtrange, ſo contrary to his former prejudices, that he was at firſt "diſobedient to the Heavenly viſion." And even when he had proceeded to the houſe of a devout Gentile, in conſequence of the rebuke, and the expreſs direction, which he then received; and when the purport of the viſion was confirmed by an indication of the divine favour towards theſe very Gentiles; ſtill we find that former prepoſſeſſions were not wholly eradicated from the minds of thoſe Jews, who were preſent. "For they of the circum-

* Epheſ. ii. 14.

circumciſion which believed, were aſtoniſhed, as many as came with Peter, becauſe that on the Gentiles alſo was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghoſt. For they heard them ſpeak with tongues, and glorify God." Then, and not till then, did the doubts and the ſcruples of the Apoſtle himſelf, as to the propriety of baptizing thoſe new converts, entirely vaniſh; yet at the ſame time he finds it neceſſary to give a reaſon, and almoſt to offer an apology, for his conduct: "Can any man forbid water, that theſe ſhould not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghoſt, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord*."

If any one ſhall chooſe to look upon this viſion as the effect of enthuſiaſm, or the ſuggeſtion of fraud, I entreat him to conſider, that an heated imagination is not apt to oppoſe men's prejudices, and to confound their deeply-rooted opinions; it is not apt to ſupply combinations, which the mind had not made before, or to diſſolve thoſe, which had been made; it is not apt to ſuggeſt modes of thinking, as grounds for acting, which if they ever had preſented

* Vid. Acts x.

ſented themſelves to the underſtanding, were aſſociated with ideas, the moſt oppoſite to a ſenſe of duty, and deſtructive of the pleaſurable feeling, which accompanies habitual and conſcious approbation. Any motive for fraud is equally difficult to be traced. The ſcheme, in whatever light it muſt be viewed, was hitherto excluſively confined to Jews; and why any of them ſhould act in a manner, ſo contrary to their own prepoſſeſſions, and ſo repugnant to the wiſhes of their aſſociates, cannot eaſily be determined. Even if we allow, that Cornelius was in ſuch a ſtation of life, as to render it deſirable, or advantageous to the Apoſtle, that he ſhould comply with the Centurion's wiſh, and admit him into the new religion; ſtill it is highly improbable that any heathen, placed in the ſituation of Cornelius, ſhould entertain ſuch a wiſh, unleſs he had ſome previous grounds to be aſſured of it's Divine origin. His employment was to check the turbulence, and reſtrain the ſpirit, of the nation in which he reſided. The contempt, which a Roman ſoldier might naturally be ſuppoſed to entertain for the inhabitants of a conquered country, was heightened by the antipathy, which always ſubſiſted between the

the Jews and Heathens; and by the animoſity, which the perpetual inſurrections of the Jews created between them and the Roman ſoldiery. Conſequently, the deſire of any Roman of rank in this army, to become an aſſociate of the loweſt and moſt deſpiſed part of this deſpiſed nation, muſt be excited by ſome very powerful cauſe indeed. Now, as no motive of intereſt or honour can be aſſigned; and as it was contrary both to the prejudices of the idolater, and to thoſe of the Jew; all ſuſpicion of colluſion, in this caſe, muſt ſurely be done away. Still however, if it can be ſuppoſed, that the plan *was* concerted between the Apoſtle, and the convert, we might have expected to ſee Gentiles, freely admitted to a ſhare of the diſtinction or authority, whichſoever it was, that the Apoſtles exerciſed, and which, according to this ſuppoſition, prompted the deſire of the centurion to become one of their number. At leaſt it might be expected, that Cornelius himſelf was to receive ſome real or imaginary advantage, in return for the pains and trouble he muſt have beſtowed, in order to bring over the Apoſtle to his wiſhes. Inſtead of which, we never hear his name mentioned again: nor do we find that any heathens

heathens whatſoever, were advanced to any ſtation in the riſing Church. The Goſpel continued, in the Apoſtolic age, to be wholly preached by Jews: and the general effect of admitting Cornelius, and other Gentiles, to the rite of Baptiſm, was to diſguſt and offend many of the old Proſelytes to the Chriſtian faith.

LET us, however, purſue the train of facts, which are drawn from the concurring, and clear, accounts, of the ſacred hiſtorians.

NOTWITHSTANDING that the plain intimation, conveyed in this viſion, was ſanctioned both by previous, and ſubſequent declarations of the Divine will; yet the national habits of thinking continued to operate, with equal force, upon the Jewiſh converts. Indeed, with ſuch difficulty were they extirpated from the minds, even of the Apoſtles, that it was not until after the moſt earneſt remonſtrances from Paul and Barnabas, and much diſputing among themſelves, that the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity could be prevailed upon publickly to pronounce, that the law of Moſes was not neceſſary to be obſerved by the Gentile converts. And it was not till ſome conſiderable ſpace of time had elapſed, that it's ritual obligations were no longer conſidered

as binding upon the Jews, or upon thoſe who were born of Jewiſh parents.

SUCH is related to have been the conduct of the perſons, who joined themſelves to Jeſus during his life, and after his death ſealed their teſtimony in his favour, by the ſacrifice of every worldly good; connexions, intereſt, reputation, health, and even life itſelf. And I think it may be ſaid, that the narrative contains an accurate and ſtriking repreſentation of men, tainted with the ſtrongeſt poſſible prepoſſeſſions; and acting, not only for a conſiderable time, but amidſt moſt peculiar circumſtances, under a miſtake, in conſequence of thoſe prepoſſeſſions. Their conduct at any inſtance of diſappointment, the manner in which they acted, when they diſcovered by infallible proof the foundation of their miſtaken opinions; and the ſlow degrees by which they gave way to complete conviction; diſplay the natural progreſs of minds, yielding reluctantly to irreſiſtible evidence;—while the perils which awaited them, when they thus yielded, prove that nothing, but the force of truth, could extort from them a teſtimony; which they could not utter, but at the hazard of incurring every worldly inconvenience.

If we admit this hiſtory of their conduct to be faithfully recorded, we are conſtrained to admit the truth of the Goſpel: ſince, ſuch conduct cannot be fully accounted for, without the ſuppoſition that their Maſter taught, acted, and ſuffered, preciſely as he is deſcribed to teach, act, and ſuffer. Is it then to be ſuppoſed, that the account thus given was invented? It would ſurely exceed the uſual limits of human ingenuity to aſſign a reaſon, why it ſhould be invented; and it appears beyond the reach of human art to fabricate ſuch an account, ſo minutely circumſtantial, extending through ſuch a period of years, and including ſuch a variety of characters; at once ſo completely conſiſtent, yet wearing the appearance of inconſiſtency; preſenting, in ſhort, a maze of human actions, readily unravelled with the proper clue, deſtitute of which the mind muſt wander in endleſs and inextricable difficulty.

For ſurely, if the Goſpel had been a work of impoſture, it cannot admit a doubt, but that the prejudices of the contrivers would have been foſtered, and indulged; that the national hopes would have been flattered; and that Jeſus, and his followers, would have

endeavoured to raiſe themſelves to worldly diſtinction, building upon them as a foundation.—In that caſe, the miſtakes and the incredulity of the diſciples, which originated wholly in their prejudices, would either have been ſtudiouſly ſuppreſſed; or oſtentatiouſly diſplayed, and artificially, expreſſly, and repeatedly, contraſted with their ſubſequent opinions and conduct. If there had been any room for diſbelief concerning the divine commiſſion, and miraculous agency, of Jeſus; was it the part of his aſſociates, perpetually to remind their readers of their own incredulity, and their own ſuſpicions? was it their part to excite diſtruſt, even when profeſſing to be endowed with the ſame powers while he was alive, and to continue the exerciſe of them after he was dead? Beſides, from what imaginable cauſe, except that they were conſcious of recording truth, is it likely that men ſhould thus freely permit their own numerous failings, and glaring inconſiſtency, to be ſolemnly and circumſtantially recorded? Surely it cannot, with any ſhadow of reaſon, be ſuſpected that theſe men, even if they had the ability, would have had the inclination, to fabricate ſuch accounts as theſe. And as, from their long continuance with

Jeſus,

Jeſus, both during his life, and after his reſurrection, they muſt have been completely able to judge concerning the reality of the cures he performed, and the other miraculous works they have atteſted, I ſee not how we can avoid aſſenting to their teſtimony, and implicitly receiving evidence, ſo ample and appropriate.

It may be neceſſary here to add, that the account in the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, concerning the conduct of thoſe Jews who embraced, as well as thoſe who rejected, Chriſtianity, is ſtrictly conformable to the nature and ſtrength of the national prejudices, and accurately correſponds with the reſt of the facts recorded. The firſt Proſelytes to Chriſtianity, yielded aſſent to the teſtimony in favour of Jeſus, from the Prophetical * books, and hearkened, without reluctance, to the declarations of the eye-witneſſes of his reſurrection. But they held, with a firm, and ſtedfaſt graſp, the peculiar tenets of the Jewiſh law; and viewed, with a jealous eye, every attempt to leſſen the authority of the Moſaic ritual, or to extend the advantages of the New Diſpenſation

* Acts xviii. 28.

penſation to the Gentiles, unleſs they previouſly conſented to be circumciſed. They arraigned the conduct, and diſputed the authority, of the Apoſtles, when they ſanctioned ſuch novel and offenſive doctrines: and they eagerly liſtened to the inſtructions of falſe teachers, who inculcated leſſons, more ſuitable to their opinions, and more acceptable to their wiſhes. By them Peter was accuſed, after baptizing Cornelius, becauſe that he had gone in to men uncircumciſed, and did eat with them *. To comply with their ſuperſtitious, and intolerant attachment to their own religion, the ſame Apoſtle thought himſelf authorized, and even obliged, to adopt the diſſembling conduct, for which he was cenſured by St. Paul †. They inſiſted ſo vehemently upon the neceſſity of circumciſing Heathen proſelytes, as to occaſion the ſolemn conſultation, recorded in the 15th chapter of Acts. On their account St. Paul was compelled to circumciſe Timothy, contrary to the dictates of his inclination, and his judgment: and to avoid giving unneceſſary offence to the rigid diſciples of Moſes,

* Acts xi. 2. † Galat. ii. 12.

Moſes, as well as Chriſt, he was perſuaded to give a public proof of his adherence to the ceremonial law *.

In the Epiſtles, and particularly that to the Galatians, we obſerve evident marks of the ſlowneſs and reluctance, with which the Jewiſh converts diveſted themſelves of their attachment to the ritual of their anceſtors, and of the readineſs with which they hearkened to thoſe inſtructors, whoſe language revived their prejudices in it's favour, and their belief of it's unalterable obligation †.

With reſpect to the unbelieving Jews, we are informed, that their oppoſition to the Chriſtian cauſe, aroſe principally upon ſuch points, as they conceived to be injurious to the Moſaic law; and that it was particularly pointed againſt thoſe Apoſtles, who were moſt zealous in teaching that it's efficacy and obligations had ceaſed. Their charge againſt Stephen was conceived in theſe terms, "This man ceaſeth not to ſpeak blaſphemous words againſt this holy place,

* Acts xvi. 3. and xxi. 21, &c.

† Theſe Jewiſh Chriſtians had recourſe to written documents alſo in ſupport of their favourite tenets. See Jones's account of the Goſpel of the Nazarenes, part ii. c. 29. ſect. 6. Upon ſimilar principles the Teſtament of the Twelve Patriarchs appears to have been compoſed. See Modern Univerſal Hiſtory, Vol. X. p. 435. note.

place, and the law. For we have heard him ſay, that this Jeſus of Nazareth ſhall deſtroy this place, and ſhall change the cuſtoms which Moſes delivered us*." For the ſame reaſons their animoſity was moſt implacable againſt St. Paul, whom they juſtly regarded as the peculiar Apoſtle of the Gentiles†, and whom therefore they conſidered as the moſt zealous opponent of the perfection, and immutability, of their antient inſtitutions.

THEIR unceaſing oppoſition to his doctrine, their virulent animoſity againſt his perſon, afford a convincing proof of the ſtrength of their national prejudices; and, at the ſame time, of the conſiſtency and accuracy of the accounts which are tranſmitted to us, concerning the means, by which thoſe prejudices, in a part of the nation, were gradually ſoftened and finally ſubdued.

WHETHER

* Acts vi. 13, 14. Thus in Antioch, the Jews liſtened attentively to the preaching of Paul, ſo long as they conceived it excluſively addreſſed to themſelves; but when they found that the new Diſpenſation was to include the Gentiles, "They were filled with envy, and ſpake againſt thoſe things which were ſpoken by Paul, contradicting and blaſpheming." Acts xiii. 43, 45. So alſo at Jeruſalem, they patiently "gave him audience," till he made a declaration in favour of the Gentiles; then they exclaimed, "Away with ſuch a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he ſhould live." Acts xxii. 21, 22.

† Acts ix. 15.

WHETHER therefore we obſerve the plain marks of national and religious prepoſſeſſions, in the minds of the diſciples, during our Saviour's life, when they were perpetually miſtaking the real character of the Meſſiah; or whether we obſerve them in their obſtinate refuſal afterwards to depart from the law of Moſes, and hold any intercourſe with the Heathens, till commanded by expreſs revelation; whether we contemplate the jealouſy, with which all the Apoſtles' conduct was watched by their converts, and the perpetual rancour with which St. Paul was oppoſed; or whether we trace to this cauſe the malignant eagerneſs, with which the Jews have always perſecuted the proſelytes to Chriſtianity *; in whatever mode we obſerve it operating, we diſcern, in an uniform and conſiſtent ſtory, the plaineſt marks of a rooted and inflexible principle, extended over an whole nation, and influencing the conduct of every

* "The rage of the Jews againſt the Chriſtians was conveyed from father to ſon, from age to age; ſo that the church of Chriſt had, in no period of time, more bitter and deſperate enemies, than that very people, to whom the immortal Saviour was more eſpecially ſent." Moſheim's Eccleſiaſt. Hiſt. book 1. c. 5.

every individual; a principle, which we have the ſtrongeſt reaſon to believe, that nothing but the moſt inconteſtable marks of truth, nothing ſhort of a divine interpoſition, would be ſufficient to eradicate from the minds of any conſiderable part of the Jewiſh people.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE DISCIPLES, DURING THE LIFE OF OUR LORD.

Introduction and diviſion of the ſubject.—1ſt, Proofs from Scripture, that this power was conferred—and 2dly, actually exerciſed.—3dly, The purpoſe for which it was beſtowed.—Laſtly, the effect it produced on the minds of the Apoſtles.—One inſtance againſt the exerciſe of this power examined.—Reaſons aſſigned for it.—Further reflections upon the ſubject.—Uniformity of the Divine diſpenſations.—Reſult of this inquiry favourable to the truth of our Holy Religion.—Vindication of the Apoſtles' character.

IT may at firſt ſight be improbable, that the diſciples, after having themſelves exerciſed the power of working miracles, ſhould ſuffer their minds to give way to any doubt, reſpecting the character and pretenſions of Jeſus. When however the fact comes to be narrowly examined, it is to be accounted for upon the ſame principles, by

which the reſt of their conduct appears to have been guided; and inſtead of affordng any juſt pretence for incredulity, it will corroborate the arguments, already advanced, in behalf of the Chriſtian religion.

PROPHETÆ Veteris Teſtamenti (ſays a learned commentator,) patrabant quidem miracula, at hanc poteſtatem aliis dare non poterant: quod Chriſtus fecit Prophetarum dominus, et nunc cùm in terris ageret, et poſtquàm in cœlum abiiſſet*. This diſtinction will be readily admitted by the careful reader of Holy Writ, with the exception perhaps of a ſingle inſtance†: but in order to proceed to the concluſions with the greater ſafety; I ſhall firſt produce the Scriptural evidence for this intereſting and important fact, and then inquire into the conſequences, which it ſeems neceſſarily to involve. In the firſt place therefore, I propoſe to ſhew, that this miraculous power was really conferred: and ſecondly, that it was as certainly exerciſed. Thirdly, I ſhall conſider the purpoſes, for which it was beſtowed; and laſtly, the effect it ſeemed to produce upon the minds of thoſe, to whom it was imparted.

1ſt, THE

* Wetſten. ad Matt. x. 1. † See 2 Kings ii. 9.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

1ſt, The teſtimony of Scripture is deciſive as to the fact of conferring the power; ſince it is expreſſly recorded, that it was beſtowed not only upon the twelve Apoſtles, but upon ſeventy others alſo. Thus we read in the 10th chapter of St. Matthew, "And when he had called unto him his twelve diſciples, he gave them power againſt unclean ſpirits, to caſt them out, and to heal all manner of ſickneſs, and all manner of diſeaſe." .... "Theſe twelve," it is repeated, "Jeſus ſent forth, and commanded them, ſaying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael. And as ye go, preach, ſaying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the ſick, cleanſe the lepers, raiſe the dead*, caſt out demons: freely ye have received, freely give†." The ſame fact is recorded, though more conciſely, by St. Mark. "And he ordained twelve, that they ſhould be with him, and that he might ſend them forth

* This clauſe is omitted in the text of Grieſbach. The evidence of various MSS. concurs with other probabilities to eſtabliſh the propriety of it's rejection.

† Vv. 1, 5—8.

forth to preach. And to have power to heal ſickneſſes, and to caſt out demons." And again, "he calleth unto him the twelve, and began to ſend them forth by two and two: and gave them power over unclean ſpirits*." To the ſame effect St. Luke: "Then he called his twelve diſciples together, and gave them authority over all demons, and to cure diſeaſes. And he ſent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the ſick." He mentions alſo the ſecond inſtance of the ſame power being conferred, though with ſome little variation. "After theſe things, the Lord appointed other ſeventy alſo, and ſent them two and two, before his face, into every city, and place, whither he himſelf would come.—And heal the ſick that are therein: and ſay unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you†".

2dly, THE evidence is no leſs full, as to the exerciſe of this power. Thus, after recording the commiſſion, with which the Apoſtles were entruſted, one of the Evangeliſts before quoted, particularly mentions the

* Mark iii. 14, 15. and vi. 7.
† Luke ix. 1, 2. x. 1, 9.

the manner, in which they uſed the powers veſted in them. "And they went out, and preached that men ſhould repent. And they caſt out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were ſick, and healed them*." It is recorded with equal preciſion, that they gave an account to their Maſter of the manner, in which they had acquitted themſelves, in the diſcharge of their important commiſſion. "And the Apoſtles gathered themſelves together unto Jeſus, and told him all things, both what *they had done*, and what they had taught†." St. Luke, to the ſame effect, ſays, "They departed, and went through the towns, preaching the Goſpel, and healing every where.—And the Apoſtles, when they were returned, told him all, that they had *done*‡." The ſame thing is implied in vv. 49, 50, of the ſame chapter; and as the evidence is indirect, it is the more unqueſtionable. St. John there informs his Maſter, that, when they were abſent in executing their commiſſion,

* Mark vi. 12, 13.

† Ibid. ver. 30. I conceive this laſt verſe, taken with the context, clearly to refer to the miracles, wrought during their miſſion. The word ἐποίησαν confirms this, as it is the term peculiarly applied to the performance of miraculous acts.

‡ Luke ix. 6, 10.

ſion, they had ſeen a ſtranger pretending * to exerciſe a miraculous power: that they were

* See alſo Mark ix. 38, 39. It is by no means neceſſary for us to underſtand, from the account here given, that any one, not authorized by Chriſt, was actually poſſeſſed of this power. "Caſting out," is equivalent to, "attempting to caſt out;" a form of ſpeech far from unuſual in the Greek language, and not unfrequent in our own. In Upton's Critical Obſervations upon Shakſpeare, there is the following rule. "In his uſe of Verbs, there is ſometimes to be underſtood intention, willingneſs, and deſire. The Greek language," he properly adds, "has many inſtances fully to our purpoſe. Euripides in Ion. v. 1346. (Edit. Muſgr.)

Ἤκουσας ὡς μ' ἔκτεινεν.

Audiviſti quomodo me interfecit, i. e. interficere voluit." p. 342. Edit. 2d. He refers alſo to Andromach. v. 811. To which may be added from Sophocles in Ajace. v. 1126. Œd. Tyr. v. 1454. (Edit. Brunck.) Herodotus, in lib. I. ſect. 109. has ἢς τὸν τὸν υἱὸν κτείνει δι' ἐμεῦ. interficere vult. See alſo Virg. Æn. III. 256. Mr. Upton quotes Paradiſe Loſt, B. IV. 175.—"that paſſed that way--i. e. that ſhould now, or hereafter, endeavour to paſs that way."

What I wiſh to guard my readers againſt is, the ſuppoſition that Scripture authorizes the concluſion, that any one, not commiſſioned from Heaven, could inſtantaneouſly effect the cure here repreſented. I am far from denying, that the diſciples, in the very limited ſtate of their knowledge, at that time, might believe, that the perſon here alluded to, could effect the ejection of a demon, by virtue of the name of Chriſt. Certain it is, that after the aſcenſion, ſome unbelieving Jews did attribute ſimilar efficacy to the name of our Saviour. See Acts xix. 13. Indeed exorciſm was a trade very much in vogue at that time, as we may learn from Joſephus, who relates ſome curious experiments of that kind, made in the preſence of Veſpaſian. Antiquit. B. VIII. c. 2. ſect. 5. I ſhall beg leave to quote his words, and recommend them to the candid attention of all thoſe, who can ſee nothing but trick in the miracles of our bleſſed Saviour. "I have ſeen" (ſays the credulous Hiſtorian) "a certain

were offended at his preſumption, and had forbidden him. It is evident, from the manner in which the repreſentation is made, that the preſumption of the ſtranger, conſiſted in his aſſuming powers equal to thoſe which the Apoſtles themſelves poſſeſſed. They forbad him to exerciſe the power, with which they were entruſted, becauſe it had not been delegated to him, as he was not even a follower of Jeſus. Moreover, it is expreſſly affirmed of the ſeventy, who had been ſent upon a ſimilar miſſion, and entruſted with ſimilar authority, that "they returned again with joy, ſaying, Lord, even the demons are ſubject

certain man of mine own country, whoſe name was Eleazar, releaſing people that were demoniacal, in the preſence of Veſpaſian, and his ſons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his ſoldiers. The manner of the cure was this: he put a ring, that had a root of one of thoſe ſorts, mentioned by Solomon, to the noſtrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his noſtrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making ſtill mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations which he compoſed. And when Eleazar would perſuade, and demonſtrate to the ſpectators, that he had ſuch a power, he ſet a little way off a cup, or baſon, full of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the ſpectators know that he had left the man."

To ſuch pretenders as theſe our Lord alludes, Luke xi. 19. "If I by Beelzebub caſt out demons, by whom do your ſons caſt them out?" No rebuke could be more pointedly juſt, no argument more rationally concluſive.

ject unto us, through thy name.—And he ſaid unto them, I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from Heaven *." It is then plainly recorded by the ſacred hiſtorians, that the diſciples, during their Maſter's lifetime, upon various occaſions, were inveſted with the power of performing miracles. There is indeed one exception to this, and one only; the examination of which I am by no means deſirous to elude, but ſhall defer, till the 4th topic comes under diſcuſſion.

3dly, When Jeſus ſent them forth, his charge, as to the inſtructions they were to deliver, was briefly this; "As ye go, preach, ſaying, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand †." When the ſeventy were appointed to this peculiar ſervice it is to be remarked, that they were ſent by Jeſus, "two and two before his face, into every city, and place, whither he himſelf would come ‡." And in conformity with the inſtructions which they received, "they went out, and preached, that men ſhould repent §." The object of their commiſſion therefore plainly was, to facilitate the execution of that deſign, for which Jeſus himſelf was ſent; to diffuſe a more

* Luke x. 17, 18.
† Matt. x. 7.
‡ Luke x. 1.
§ Mark vi. 12.

a more general knowledge of his dignity; to excite the attention of the Jews to his pretenſions; and to prepare them for becoming members of the expected kingdom, by a change of heart, and a reformation of life. They were inveſted with the power of working miracles, that thereby they might be enabled the more effectually to accompliſh theſe great ends; that they might clearly evince, that they acted under the authority of God; and might not be confounded with the zealots, and impoſtors, who abounded in thoſe days. Without this power, plain and illiterate as they were, and ſimple as were the injunctions, which they were commanded to deliver, it is more than probable, they would have met with no attention: they would therefore have failed to prepare the minds of the Jews, for the reception of the perſonage, who was to follow them.

In explaining the object and extent of the diſciples' commiſſion, it is obvious to remark the limited nature of their preaching, during their Maſter's life-time. It was, ſimply and expreſſly, to inculcate the neceſſity of repentance, becauſe the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. What this king-

dom was, they had not yet learned; their thoughts indeed were often directed to the ſubject, but their ideas concerning it's nature were groſſly inaccurate. It is extremely erroneous to ſuppoſe, as Hammond has done, that the Apoſtles were fully aware of the real import of the phraſe; and that, with a complete knowledge of the purpoſe and conſequences of Chriſt's coming, they were inſtructed to warn the Jews of the calamities, which awaited them in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, in caſe they perſiſted in unbelief*. Their whole conduct, both before and after the conferring of theſe extraordinary powers, ſhews that they acted in obedience to the commands of their Maſter in delivering to others, what he had enjoined; but that they were utterly unacquainted with the preciſe meaning of the meſſage. It ſufficiently anſwered the purpoſe, for which they were ſent, that they ſhould exhort their countrymen to amend their lives; that they ſhould inſtruct them to expect the approach of the Prophet, from whom their own powers were derived, and from whom their

* Vid. ad Matt. iii. 2. Their preaching indeed had the effect of a warning, as will be ſhewn hereafter; but the learned commentator is clearly wrong, in ſuppoſing the preachers to have been thoroughly inſtructed upon this ſubject, and fully aware of the tendency of what they taught.

their hearers would receive fuller information, as to the object of his miſſion, and the nature of his doctrines. In conformity with theſe ſentiments, is the opinion of the learned Roſenmüller. Nihil nunc quidem ultrà mandatum Apoſtolis, quàm ut Judæos ad vitam meliorem hortarentur, et ad Meſſiam audiendum pertraherent, à quo accepturi eſſent cætera, quæ ad ſalutem ipſis eſſent neceſſaria. Jeſum eſſe hunc Meſſiam, nondum tunc temporis palàm profeſſi ſunt diſcipuli. To the ſame effect the pious and judicious Le Clerc expreſſes himſelf. Obſervandum eſt hoc loco Apoſtolos, qui mittebantur ut nunciarent propinquum eſſe *regnum cælorum*, vix ipſos ſatis ſciviſſe quid eſſet; cùm ad adſcenſum ipſum Chriſti, eum in terris regnaturum fuiſſe crediderint. Vid. Act. i. 6. Nihil ergo reponere potuiſſent quærentibus quid iis verbis intelligerent, niſi ſe à magiſtro ſuo, Jeſu Nazareno, ita juſſos loqui; cui rei addere poterant fidelem narrationem, ex quâ quid conſequeretur, elicere auditores poterant*.

4thly, ALTHOUGH they did not clearly underſtand the import, or comprehend the full extent, of what they were to teach, yet as

* Vid. Roſenmüller. and Cleric. ad Matth. x. 7.

as there was nothing in the manner of delivering this commiſſion to them, which alarmed their prejudices, they entered upon their taſk with eagerneſs, and even pride. Acting under their former habitual impreſſions, they conceived themſelves exerciſing ſome ſhare of that power, with which they were afterwards to be inveſted, as the choſen friends of the great Prophet, by whom they had been ſelected as the inſtruments of his high commiſſion: and hence aroſe both the joy, with which they returned to give an account of the power they had diſplayed; and the haughtineſs, with which they had interfered to prevent a perſon, not commiſſioned by Jeſus, from exerciſing a ſimilar power. I muſt not, however, omit the ſingle exception to this ability to work miracles, which is recorded by three of the Evangeliſts, with little or no variation. The following is the account given by St. Matthew. "When they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and ſaying, Lord, have mercy on my ſon: for he is lunatic, and ſore vexed: for oft-times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy diſciples, and they could not cure him.

him. Then Jeſus anſwered and ſaid, O faithleſs and perverſe generation, how long ſhall I be with you? how long ſhall I ſuffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jeſus rebuked the demon; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the diſciples to Jeſus apart, and ſaid, Why could not we caſt him out? And Jeſus ſaid unto them, Becauſe of your unbelief: for verily I ſay unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of muſtard ſeed, ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it ſhall remove; and nothing ſhall be impoſſible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer, and faſting *."

CONCERNING this incident, it ſeems neceſſary to obſerve, that, if Jeſus really came with authority from Heaven, to teach a new law, to announce bleſſings, and to award puniſhment, Faith, or a confidence in his power, and a reliance upon his promiſes, was a qualification, which might, with the ſtricteſt propriety, be required in thoſe, who were to receive themſelves, or to adminiſter

* Matt. xvii. 14—21. Mark ix. 14—29. Luke ix 38—42.

adminiſter to others, any preternatural alleviation of their bodily ſufferings.

For in the firſt place, it ſerved to diſplay that intimate knowledge of the human heart, which can proceed only from him, to whom all ſecrets are known. This knowledge, it appears, our Lord poſſeſſed, and exhibited in the moſt extraordinary manner; but upon no occaſions more, than in ſelecting objects for the exerciſe of his preternatural authority. Hence he could neither be entrapped by the ſnares of artifice, nor miſled by the profeſſions of hypocriſy, when any one ſolicited the performance of a cure; and hence he could try, with the utmoſt nicety, the permanence and conſtancy of his diſciples' belief; ſince the power, which attended the call of faith, deſerted them, when any doubt or incredulity hovered near their hearts. That this intimate knowledge of the moſt ſecret thoughts of men was judged peculiarly neceſſary, and indeed indiſpenſable, in a teacher divinely inſpired, we may learn from a circumſtance, which actually occurred in the courſe of our Lord's Miniſtry.—'When a woman, who had been a ſinner, anointed Jeſus while he was ſitting

at

at meat with Simon the Phariſee, 'he who had bidden him, *ſpake* * *within himſelf*, ſaying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman, this is that toucheth him: for ſhe is a ſinner:" and thus proved it to be a natural notion, that a divine inſtructor ſhould be endued with that knowledge, which Jeſus actually poſſeſſed. Jeſus replied to his thoughts, ſhewed by a parable, that the woman's expreſſion of her gratitude was reaſonable, and, on account of her former and preſent marks of repentance, ſpake comfort to her, by thrice declaring, that her ſins were remitted †.'

But ſecondly, as our Lord was hereby enabled to diſcern, ſo, by queſtioning thus minutely the moral qualifications of the candidates for his favour, he evinced his determination to reward, a virtuous diſpoſition. That the faith, thus inſiſted upon, was intitled to remuneration, as being the evidence of ſuch a diſpoſition, will, I truſt, fully appear from the following conſiderations.

If

* Luke vii. 39, &c.

† Newcome on our Lord's conduct, p. 119. The whole chapter deſerves to be moſt carefully peruſed.

If it be allowed, that it is poſſible, for the Deity to reveal his will to his creatures, it will readily be granted, that ſuch an interpoſition will be vouchſafed, to enlighten their ignorance, to reform their morals, and to propoſe ſuch ſanctions to virtue, and diſcouragements from vice, as may powerfully influence their conduct. It is alſo likely, that he will deal with his creatures in this, as in other inſtances; that he will treat them as free agents, and not control their reaſon, or their will, to accept, or reject, the proffer, by ſuch overpowering evidence, as to render heſitation, or diſbelief impoſſible. He is likely to deliver ſuch precepts, accompanied by ſuch atteſtations, as are ſufficient for the conviction of rational and good minds.—Now the evils, for the cure of which the poſſibility of God's interference is admitted, muſt neceſſarily have prevailed to a conſiderable degree, before the neceſſity of any departure from the ordinary methods of governing the world could exiſt. And it is undeniable, that from the very nature of the evils, propoſed to be cured, there will ariſe various obſtacles to the adoption of the remedy, ſo graciouſly preſcribed. Ignorance is the fruitful

fruitful ſource of prejudice and errour; vicious practices entail upon the human heart a long train of cheriſhed habits, difficult to be eradicated; and if the ſanctions to be propoſed are derived from the inviſible world, no little courage and reſolution will be required, to enable a man to reſign preſent viſible enjoyments, in the expectation of future rewards. The prejudices thus imbibed, the propenſities thus indulged, will preſent a formidable barrier to the reception of truth, even into well-diſpoſed minds; and the hold, which preſent and carnal objects take upon the ſenſes, indiſpoſes them to receive a ſpiritual doctrine, let the evidence, with which it is accompanied, be ever ſo ſtrong. Hence in ſuch caſes it will not follow, that even the atteſtation of miracles will compel aſſent from every ſpectator; —the obſtinate prepoſſeſſions of the mind, and the darling gratifications of the body, will oppoſe conſiderable difficulty, to the admiſſion of doctrines the moſt uſeful, and rational, even when enforced by the moſt powerful evidence. Some good ſeeds of virtuous inclination muſt be ſown in the heart, before it will conſent to receive a law, which would correct opinions, and

ſubdue habits, ſo long foſtered; the docility, with which ſuch inſtructions are ſuffered to take root, muſt proceed from a moral quality of no ordinary merit; and the implicit belief of the declarations of a perſon, ſo commiſſioned, will in ſuch caſes be the effect, and muſt itſelf aſſume the name, of genuine virtue. If moreover the entertaining or avowing ſuch ſentiments be attended with any worldly inconvenience or hazard; if the ſafety, or intereſt, or reputation be thereby endangered; the moral effort will be ſo much greater, and it's value enhanced in proportion. To embrace truth when it is unpopular, to adhere to it in ſpite of reproach and inconvenience, will on all ſides be allowed to be an indubitable teſt, both of ſincerity and reſolution. Belief, in ſuch a caſe, is not the mere aſſent of the mind to a propoſition, extorted by the weight of evidence, and producing no fruits upon the conduct; it is the change, heart and ſoul, of the whole thinking and acting man; it is the relinquiſhment of obſtinate prejudices; the abandonment of corrupt and depraved notions; the reſignation of the whole ſelf to truth and virtue.

If, from abſtract reaſoning on the pre-exiſtent,

exiſtent, and concomitant, circumſtances, which would be likely to attend a revelation of the will of God to his creatures, we proceed to that, which is aſſerted to have been made in the caſe of the Chriſtian religion, we ſhall find, that ſuch was actually the ſtate of things, as to draw upon thoſe, who yielded aſſent to the declarations of Jeſus Chriſt, the praiſe of ingenuouſneſs and ſingleneſs of heart; of a diſpoſition to embrace truth, however oppoſite to their rooted prepoſſeſſions, however repugnant to their cuſtoms and habits, and however irreconcileable with their preſent intereſt and comfort. Whether we look to the Jewiſh or the Gentile world, impediments of the moſt formidable nature, oppoſed themſelves to thoſe articles of faith, and thoſe maxims of conduct, which were neceſſary to be received by the followers of Jeſus.—Religious principle and national views, ſuperadded to the ſordid notions and corrupt practices of vice and ſuperſtition, equally inclined the diſciple of Moſes, and the pupil of idolatry, to turn a deaf ear to the glad tidings of ſalvation. With the former, inflexible attachment to the Law, connected with the groſſeſt views, and moſt erroneous traditions, and

and an abſorption of moral principle in ceremonial obſervances, and ſelfiſh ideas of national aggrandizement, concurred to render faith in Jeſus, the reſult of a moſt powerful combination of reſolution, diſintereſtedneſs, and docility; ſo much ſo indeed, that we ſee thoſe, who were diſtinguiſhed, in this particular, from the reſt of their countrymen, acting for ſome time under a perpetual conflict, between reaſon and prejudice; between worldly expectations, and ſpiritual views; between the teſtimony of their ſenſes, and the ſuggeſtions of their opinions. Nor was the taſk leſs difficult, nor the merit leſs conſpicuous, in thoſe among the Heathen, who embraced the doctrine of the Jewiſh Meſſiah. They were called upon to forego the prejudices which education had nouriſhed, and the vices which idolatry had ſanctioned; they were to expoſe themſelves to the ſcorn and deriſion of their friends and countrymen, and to receive inſtruction on the moſt important of all ſubjects, religion and morals, from the diſciples of Moſes. Nothing therefore, but a ſtrong principle of virtue, reſigning habits and prepoſſeſſions, at the call of reaſon and of truth, could prevail upon

upon a Gentile to embrace a religion, proſcribed and perſecuted as it was, from the hands of ſuch a deſpiſed and deteſted people. And accordingly we find, that, at firſt, few Heathens in the higher claſſes of life, had the courage to relinquiſh their pride and their vices, their temporal expectations and their worldly luſts, to become the followers of Jeſus, and the aſſociates of Jews. Beſides, "Chriſt crucified," as it was "unto the Jews a ſtumbling-block," ſo was it "unto the Gentiles fooliſhneſs*." As it offended the pride of the one, it incurred the deriſion of the other. To deify a malefactor, ſeemed, to the generality of them, a ſpecies of folly ſo glaringly abſurd, that they would neither take the pains to inveſtigate the cauſe, nor expoſe themſelves to the hazard of participating in the conſequences.

HENCE we ſee, that the facts recorded, concerning the origin and progreſs of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, warrant us in aſſerting an high degree of moral excellence for thoſe, who ſubmitted their erroneous opinions to the doctrines of Jeſus, and bade defiance to pain and contumely, in order to

* 1 Cor. i. 23.

to embrace a life of mortification and ſelf-denial, of repentance and amendment. For without a correſponding change of conduct, a mere declaration of faith would have been nugatory and unavailing; nor indeed is there any other ſpecies of faith, to which, in the writings of the New Teſtament, any merit is aſſigned, or any reward promiſed. And ſurely it will be allowed, that the profeſſion of faith muſt have been real, when no poſſible advantage could ariſe from the mere profeſſion, but on the contrary, every worldly inconvenience. The only perſons, of whom it can be pretended, that their faith was unaccompanied with a correſponding change of habits, or that their profeſſion of it was occaſioned by the deſire of obtaining ſome preſent advantage, were thoſe, who ſolicited ſome miraculous cure: and of theſe it may be remarked, that the ſincerity of their faith was demonſtrated by the earneſtneſs of their petitions to obtain relief, when that relief could only be afforded by a miracle. Jeſus therefore, in appropriating a ſhare of his ſupernatural gifts to thoſe more particularly, who poſſeſſed this previous qualification, acted in ſtrict conformity with his character

racter as a moral teacher, ſince the power, with which he entruſted ſome, and by which he relieved others, evidently was employed in thoſe inſtances, as the immediate and direct reward of a virtuous diſpoſition.

LASTLY, it would have been injurious to the evidence, and conſequently deſtructive of the very ends, of Chriſt's coming, if the preternatural power which he exerciſed, had been indiſcriminately applied to the relief, or entruſted to the management, of any, who wanted the previous qualification of faith. The effect of gifts ſo applied might, and would have been aſcribed to the operation of chance; or to captious and raſh obſervers, they might have furniſhed ſome pretence for aſſerting, that they were intended to reward even the withholding of aſſent from the Divine commiſſion of Jeſus. So far from affording a teſtimony in his favour, they might have operated in a manner preciſely the contrary. It was therefore both reaſonable and neceſſary, that theſe powers ſhould be granted or withholden, according to the previous ſtate of mind and diſpoſition in the perſons exerciſing it. In the circumſtance, which has furniſhed occaſion for this inveſtigation, the diſciples

found themſelves endowed with the faculty of working miracles, ſo long as they had full reliance upon the goodneſs and the power of him who beſtowed it. After a continual exerciſe of it, they might be diſpoſed to arrogate to themſelves the merit; they might conſider it as a more immediate indulgence of Heaven to themſelves; or on the other hand, alarmed at the violence of the calamity, which occaſioned ſuch an earneſt application for relief, they might fancy themſelves unable to remove it, and ſo queſtion the ability of Jeſus to confer power to ſuch an extent. In ſhort, they might be in a frame of mind *, in which the continuance of the preternatural endowment might be injurious to the very cauſe, which it was intended to promote. In this caſe it is conſonant with the higheſt wiſdom, that thoſe powers ſhould be ſuſpended or withdrawn; and then the ſuſpenſion or diſcontinuance of thoſe powers, is ſo far from ſerving as an argument, to prove that they never were conferred or exerciſed, that on the contrary, it has a tendency to eſtabliſh the fact, and to

* It appears, indeed, from what our Lord ſubjoins, that they had neglected the appointed means of attaining ſuch a frame of mind, as would enable them to poſſeſs the neceſſary qualification of faith. Vid. inf. p. 189.

to prove the conſiſtency and wiſdom of the ſcheme, in ſubſervience to which theſe extraordinary qualifications were beſtowed.

Let us for a moment ſuppoſe the power of working miracles conferred upon a perſon, who did not believe in Chriſt. If he did not exerciſe that power for the purpoſe of promoting the belief of Chriſtianity, it would have been conferred in vain. If he had exerciſed it for the purpoſe of preventing that belief, it would have been conferred with a very bad effect, and would have ſubjected Chriſt's religion to the prejudices and antipathies of an adverſary. But if we can ſuppoſe that adverſary to diſregard his prejudices, and to exerciſe miraculous powers for the purpoſe of making converts, would not the want of conſiſtency, and the want of ſincerity, have been objected to the teacher; and would not ſuch an objection have obſtructed the efficacy of the doctrine which he taught?—Inſurmountable therefore are the difficulties which preſent themſelves, and equally irreconcileable are they both to the ordinary and extraordinary providence of God, if we admit the office of propagating Chriſtianity by miracles, to have been conſigned to any agent, who did

not previouſly, and in the moment of exerciſing that office, believe in Chriſt. From the general imbecillity of human nature, the general conviction of a believer might be, for a ſeaſon, overpowered by doubt or fear; but return it would, when doubt or fear had ceaſed to operate; and their operation would certainly be counteracted by every occaſion, upon which the power of working miracles was exerted.

But further, we may obſerve that, from the circumſtances of the fact, which appears to furniſh ground for the objection that the apoſtles really had not the power of working miracles, a concluſion may be fairly drawn in direct contradiction to the objection. For from what cauſe ſhould they aſk, why they could not perform *this* miracle, if they had not been authoriſed to perform, and if they had not actually performed, *miracles* at other times?

There remains only one other point to be cleared up, reſpecting this very intereſting tranſaction. Some commentators imagine that, as the Sacred text now ſtands, our Lord is made to aſſign two different, and even contradictory, reaſons to account for the demon not having been ejected by the

the diſciples. So inſuperable indeed does this objection appear in the eyes of one eminent critic *, that, in order to remove it, he adopts the violent expedient of expunging one of the verſes in queſtion from the text. But that the contradiction is only in appearance, and therefore that the difficulty completely vaniſhes when the paſſage is properly explained, is well ſhewn by a commentator already quoted. "Suprà dixerat Chriſtus, fiduciâ opus eſſe ad hæc præſertim majoris notæ miracula. Nunc oſtendit, quomodo ea parari poſſit, *precibus* nimirùm *fervidis*. Jejunium ideò adjungit, quia ad preces in primis requiritur animus demiſſus, cui rei inſervit jejunium †."

It

* Vid. Matt. xvii. 20, 21. and Wakefield ad loc.

† Roſenmüller in loc—Upon this queſtion of the connection of prayer with faith, I muſt beg alſo to quote the obſervations, which are made by Abp. Newcome, after he has explained Matt. xviii. 19. as referring to "petitions offered up by the Apoſtles for the power of working miracles, in confirmation of their deciſions." 'See a general inſtance of ſuch prayer (adds this excellent Theologian) Acts iv. 30. and a particular one Acts ix. 40. Obſerve alſo the mention of faith, as availing to the performance of miracles, Acts vi. 8. 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The prayer of faith, which was to heal the ſick, James v. 14, 15. was confined to the age of miracles: for it follows, "and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up, and though he have committed ſins" (occaſioning the judicial infliction of the diſeaſe, 1 Cor. v. 5. xi. 30. even in this caſe)

It appears therefore from the writings of the New Teſtament, that the diſciples were inveſted with the power of working miracles while their Lord was yet upon earth. And as the teſtimony to the fact is ſo undeſigned, it demands our more unequivocal aſſent. So little does any notion appear to have poſſeſſed theſe writers, of making a boaſt

caſe) "they ſhall be forgiven him:" (the immediate puniſhment of them ſhall be removed, and the guilt of them afterwards on the Goſpel conditions.) In St. John's firſt epiſtle there is this remarkable paſſage: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we aſk any thing according to his will, he heareth us.—If any man ſee his brother ſin a ſin, which is not unto death, he ſhall aſk, and he ſhall give him life for them that ſin not unto death. There is a ſin unto death. I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it." c. v. 14, 16. The prayer for another, here mentioned, has juſtly been conſidered as a prayer offered up for one, who, in conſequence of ſin, had been judicially viſited with ſickneſs; and the impulſe of the ſpirit, or human prudence, was to determine whether the ſin was unto death. It ſhould ſeem therefore, that the confidence, which thoſe Chriſtians had, that God heard their petitions, which were according to his will, referred to working ſuch a particular kind of miracles. And hence will be explained a parallel paſſage in the ſame Epiſtle: "Whatſoever we aſk, we receive of him; becauſe we keep his commandments." c. iii. 22. It appears by v. 24. that this was ſpoken of ſuch as had the ſpirit. When our Lord ſays, "Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you: for every one that aſketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened:" (Matt. vii. 7, 8.) he refers to ſpiritual bleſſings, and the good things of the goſpel; not to every temporal bleſſing, but to what was profitable for ſalvation. Comp. ver. 11. and Luke xi. 13.' Newcome on our Lord's conduct, p. 189. not.

boaſt of this power, or of endeavouring artfully to induce a perſuaſion, that they were inveſted with it, that the only circumſtance relative to it, which is mentioned with any particularity, furniſhes at firſt, as we have ſeen, ſome room to doubt, whether any ſuch power was poſſeſſed at all. Theſe miraculous acts being once ſubſtantiated, a ſplendid acceſſion is made to the great maſs of evidence, in favour of the divine origin of Chriſtianity. And the more accurately we examine into the circumſtances, under which they were wrought, the greater will be their weight in aſcertaining the preponderance of truth, or errour, in this moſt important queſtion.

It is ſcarcely neceſſary to ſuggeſt, that an intelligent believer, in arguing for the truth of Chriſt's religion, does not inſiſt upon the miracles of Chriſt himſelf, conſidered only as ſupernatural events, but as having a viſible congruity with the peculiar and avowed pretenſions of the perſon, who performed them. Thus too the miracles wrought by the Apoſtles, viewed in reference to their circumſtances, and to the peculiar characters, opinion, and conduct of thoſe who performed them, conſtitute a

diſtinct,

diſtinct, a multiplied ſeries of evidence, for the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

We may remark in the firſt place, that the commiſſion, for the more ſucceſsful execution of which the diſciples were inveſted with this preternatural authority, is in ſtrict conformity with the method, which Divine Providence appears to have purſued in his dealings with mankind; and it forms a link in the chain of thoſe diſpenſations, by which the Almighty has been pleaſed to interpoſe; eſpecially when the ſins and offences of men, render a diſplay of the ſterner attribute of juſtice more immediately neceſſary. Even then we find that a veil is not thrown over the amiable features of mercy; ſince, in the ſpirit of that benign quality, he points out their offences, warns them of his intention, and gives them time for repentance and amendment, that they may thereby eſcape from the wrath to come.

This was manifeſted in the intimations, which were conveyed to the old world, through Enoch, and through Noah; in the repreſentations ſo repeatedly made to the kingdoms of Iſrael and Judah through the Prophets; as well as in the timely and gracious invitation to the inhabitants of Nineveh,

veh, which happily awakened them to a ſenſe of their guilt, and averted the impending puniſhment. As however, at the coming of Chriſt *, a laſt and a moſt ſignal judgement was denounced againſt thoſe, who ſhould be found impenitent and obdurate; ſtill greater care was manifeſted, and ſtill more important inſtruments were employed, to bring the infatuated nation to a ſenſe of their crimes, and to make them worthy

* The period of the Meſſiah's reign, was both predicted, and expected, to abound in bleſſings to thoſe, who ſhould be found deſerving of the favour of God by faith and obedience; and in calamities to thoſe, whoſe diſobedience and obduracy ſhould render them objects of his diſpleaſure. The Jews unhappily conceived, that the former would be excluſively ſhowered down upon them; while the afflictions would be as excluſively the portion of the Heathens.—It is certain, that John the Baptiſt enforced his warning, by dwelling more particularly upon the judgements, which were to take place; it is probable on the other hand, that the diſciples dwelt upon the more pleaſing topic of the advantages, which would enſue from a compliance with the terms of their meſſage; but the tendency of both was the ſame, to awaken their hearers to repentance, and to avert the merited diſpleaſure of the Almighty.—Both however performed their commiſſions, with a limited and indiſtinct view of the whole purpoſe, for which they were ſent; as has been ſhewn before of the diſciples, and as is proved in the caſe of John by the meſſage which he ſent to our Saviour: concerning which, after a full conſideration, I adopt the opinion of Tertullian, that it originated in John's own doubts: and in this view it ſtrengthens the evidence for Chriſtianity, as it takes away the poſſibility of colluſion between the Meſſiah and his forerunner. See Matt. xi. 2—6. and Jortin's Diſcourſes concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 195, &c. particularly p. 200.

worthy of being admitted into the kingdom of righteouſneſs. A greater prophet than any, who had appeared under the Moſaic diſpenſation, was purpoſely raiſed up to preach repentance and remiſſion of ſins, and to prepare the way for the advent of the Meſſiah. The birth of John the Baptiſt was predicted by an angel, and his miſſion was adorned by almoſt every circumſtance, which could give dignity and authority to his character, and ſecure attention to his exhortations. The great object of his preaching was, "to turn the hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt *;" and the commiſſion, afterwards granted to the Apoſtles, proceeded upon the ſame plan, and pointed to the ſame end. As the Baptiſt was ſent to inculcate upon the Jews, the neceſſity of purifying their hearts, and reforming their habits, before the kingdom of the Meſſiah ſhould arrive, and before the judgement to be revealed ſhould overwhelm the unrighteous; ſo when Jeſus came, his diſciples were ſent to inſtruct thoſe, who were yet ſtrangers to his perſon and character, concerning the indiſpenſable neceſſity of poſſeſſing the ſame previous qualifications of

* Luke i. 17.

of purity, and contrition of heart. As the former excited the attention of his hearers, by the auſterity of his life, and the earneſtneſs of his rebukes; ſo theſe awakened the feelings, and impreſſed the underſtandings, of their countrymen ſtill more forcibly, by a diſplay of miraculous powers: becauſe the time was ſhorter, and a more urgent neceſſity exiſted, for their exhortations to take immediate effect.

An advocate for revelation may conſiſtently argue, that this uniformity and correſpondence of deſign in all the various diſpenſations, which are aſſerted to have proceeded from God, ſince the earlieſt ages of the world, is more than can rationally be imputed to a ſeries of human fabrications; and it muſt be allowed, that the light, in which they repreſent the mercy of the Almighty, as giving his creatures every opportunity of eſcaping from deſerved and threatened puniſhment, and entreating them, as it were, to accept his proffered pardon and favour, is perfectly ſuitable to the beſt notions we can form of the Deity.

Secondly, We may remark, in the narrative of theſe tranſactions, a congruity even with our Lord's way of teaching, in the

progreſſive unfolding of the character and office of the Meſſiah; and in the almoſt imperceptible gradations, by which he divulged the real nature of his kingdom. It was evidently the aim of our bleſſed Saviour not to offend, and alarm unneceſſarily, the prejudices of his hearers;—had he ſo done, the number of thoſe, who entitled themſelves to the favour of God, by hearkening to the meſſage delivered by his Son, would moſt probably have been conſiderably leſs;—but by ſtrictly inculcating the moral duties, and aſſerting their ſuperiority over ceremonial obſervances, while at the ſame time he diſplayed his ſupernatural powers, he gradually prepared their minds for the whole of that truth, which at firſt would have been alike adverſe to their wiſhes, and contradictory to their preconceived opinions. "I have many things to ſay," was his conſiderate addreſs to his diſciples, "but ye cannot bear them now." He dealt with his countrymen at large, as he did with his choſen followers, by making uſe of thoſe perſons, as inſtruments for the important purpoſe of giving more notoriety to his miſſion, who were themſelves unacquainted with the whole import of the Goſpel ſcheme; and who

who conſequently could not ſhock the ears of the Jews, or hinder the ſucceſs of the Meſſiah, by divulging prematurely, and announcing indiſcreetly, the whole deſign of their Lord's coming.

From this circumſtance reſults, thirdly, a complete proof of the abſence of impoſture from the ſcheme: becauſe the diſciples worked miracles, according to their own apprehenſion, not for Chriſtianity as it really is in itſelf, and as they afterwards taught it; but partly with moral views of a general nature, and partly from perſonal conſiderations of their own grandeur in the Meſſiah's kingdom. Had they, when they ſet out upon the diſcharge of this commiſſion, been apprized of the conſequences of what they taught; it is more than probable, that their prejudices and their fears would have combined to prevent them from embarking in a cauſe, which threatened ruin to the peculiar inſtitutions of Moſes, and contradicted thoſe interpretations of the prophetic writings, which were regarded with as much fondneſs, and watched with as much jealouſy, as even the prophecies themſelves. While therefore, from their limited view of things, they were acting a main

main part in ſupport of a deſign, at which their feelings and their prejudices at that time revolted, and which was in direct oppoſition to their ſuppoſed intereſt, it is impoſſible they could have been acting deliberately in concert with an impoſtor—it is equally impoſſible, that they ſhould have been dupes to the artifice of a deceiver, ſince they muſt certainly know whether they had the power of working miracles, or not—laſtly, if they had been dupes, it is impoſſible that they ſhould afterwards encounter every inconvenience, and every hazard, for the ſake of bearing teſtimony to the integrity of him, by whom they were conſcious of having been deceived.

On this head, however, we may remark further, that this limitation of their teaching accounts for the Jews not taking offence immediately at a doctrine, which did not appear to infringe upon the national prejudices; and for the Apoſtles not being ſeized by the bigoted rulers, as accomplices of Jeſus. They had, in the courſe of their particular and detached miniſtry, ſaid nothing which amounted to blaſphemy in the judgement of their hearers; and therefore they gave no offence by their miracles, as Chriſt did, becauſe his miracles were worked profeſſedly

profeſſedly for a diſtinct purpoſe from that, which the Apoſtles ſeemed to have immediately in view. Afterwards, when they taught, as their Maſter had taught, then their miracles did give offence; and they became expoſed to a perſecution, ſimilar to that which had ſubjected Jeſus to an ignominious and painful death. In this, therefore, as well as in other parts of the Goſpel hiſtory, we obſerve a regular chain in the incidents, and a natural adaptation of motives to conduct, which it would be moſt difficult to counterfeit, and which therefore entitle it to the character of a probable and faithful narrative.

Such are the proofs, which eſtabliſh the fact of the diſciples having worked miracles during the life of their Maſter; and ſuch, it appears to me, is the uſe and application of the circumſtances attending this extraordinary fact. If it ſhould ſeem to any one incredible, that theſe very men ſhould relapſe into doubt and ſuſpicion, after exerciſing preternatural powers themſelves; and that they ſhould even abandon, in the moſt trying ſituation, the perſon, by whom theſe powers had been beſtowed; let me intreat him to recollect the deep root, which national pre-

poſſeſſ-

poſſeſſions had taken in the minds of the collective Jewiſh people: and let me urge upon his underſtanding, in the memorable words of two illuſtrious ornaments of Chriſtian antiquity, that, of all prepoſſeſſions, thoſe, which are connected with religion, are the moſt fixed, and the moſt obſtinate. To this effect is the declaration of the truly venerable Origen: εὐχερέσερόν γε ἄνθρωπος τὰς περὶ ἄλλα συνηθείας, κἂν δυσαποσπάσως αὐτῶν ἔχῃ, καταλείψαι ἂν, ἢ τὰς περὶ τὰ δόγματα. The eloquence of Chryſoſtom was employed in enforcing the ſame truth. Ὅταν δὲ καὶ ἐν δόγμασιν ἡ συνήθεια ᾖ, βεβαιοτέρα γίνεται. πάντας γάρ τις εὐκολώτερον ἀμείψειε, ἢ τὰ περὶ τὰς θρησκείας *.

If, by ſhewing the conduct of the Apoſtles to be in ſtrict conformity with the immutable principles of human nature, we ſhall extort a reluctant aſſent to the credibility of their teſtimony, while the fact itſelf ſhall ſeem to expoſe them to cenſure; for their

* Apud Grot. de Jure Belli et Pacis, lib. II. c. 20. I find the ſame ſentiment admirably expreſſed in the Bampton Lectures of Dr. White. "Prejudices derived from early education, and confirmed by habit, become, as it were, interwoven with our very conſtitution; and thoſe opinions, which ſeem connected with the awful ſanctions, and the precious intereſt, of religion, we are always diſpoſed to watch with unuſual jealouſy, and to guard with unuſual firmneſs." p. 77.

their weakneſs, and inconſiſtency, let me be indulged with the privilege of vindicating theſe honeſt but untutored men, whoſe only crime it is, not to have formed an exception to the common lot of mankind. Let me urge in their behalf, the difficulties, the almoſt inſuperable difficulties, ariſing from early habit, prejudice, ſuperſtition, reverence to their ſuperiours, a deſire of worldly good. —But above all, let me plead their undaunted and ſteady defence of the truth, when at laſt it made it's way to their hearts —their patient endurance of pain and contumely; diſtreſs and danger; and finally, even death itſelf; for the ſake of Chriſt, and his Goſpel. Magnanimous martyrs of Chriſtian truth! If there be adverſaries ſo irrational and unfeeling, as to impeach the competence of your underſtanding, or to queſtion the extent of your integrity, on account of the errours and failings, which you have recorded with a candour and ingenuouſneſs, ſuch as alone ſhould exempt you from cenſure, and from ſuſpicion; let me blunt the keenneſs of their reproaches, and arreſt the force of their reaſoning, by employing the pathetic and forcible apology of a Chriſtian Father in behalf of men, in

whoſe errours he had once ſhared, and for whom therefore he was enabled to urge the moſt extenuating pleas in the moſt perſuaſive language. Illi ſæviant in vos, qui neſciunt quo cum labore verum inveniatur, et quàm difficilè caveantur errores. Illi in vos ſæviant, qui neſciunt quàm rarum et arduum ſit, carnalia phantaſmata piæ mentis ſerenitate ſuperare. Illi in vos ſæviant, qui neſciunt quantâ difficultate ſanetur oculus interioris hominis, ut poſſit intueri ſolem ſuum. Illi in vos ſæviant, qui neſciunt quantis gemitibus et ſuſpiriis fiat, ut ex quantulâcunque parte poſſit intelligi Deus. Poſtremò, illi in vos ſæviant, qui nullo tali errore decepti ſunt, quali vos deceptos videtis *.

* Auguſtin. apud Grot. ubi ſuprà.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE SCHEME OF THE GOSPEL.

Difference, between the mode and extent of Chriſt's preaching and that of the Apoſtles, ſtated.—made the ground of an objection by infidels.—Deſign of the Goſpel.—offered to the Jews firſt—but intended from the firſt to comprehend the Gentiles.—Various proofs of this intention.—Rejection of it by the Jews foretold by our Lord, as well as the deſtruction of the Jewiſh polity.—Diſciples acted in conformity with the views and directions of their Maſter.—If they had made any alteration, it would have been of a very different kind from that imputed to them.—No motive can be aſſigned for their conduct in this particular, but their well-grounded confidence in the pretenſions of Jeſus to the title of Meſſiah.—Improbabilities of any other ſuppoſition.

IN tracing the hiſtory of the Chriſtian religion through it's firſt ſtages, a ſtriking difference is obſervable between the manner and the extent of Chriſt's preaching, and that of his Apoſtles. The ſalutary labours of the former were confined to Judea; his diſcourſes were addreſſed to his countrymen, and his miracles, except in

three* remarkable inſtances, were excluſively wrought for their comfort and conviction. In one of the inſtances alluded to, he at firſt ſeemed to repel the entreaties of an heathen, who ſought for an extenſion of his miraculous powers toward her child; and he declared that he was not ſent but unto the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael †. He converſed indeed with Gentiles; but he ſeems to have converted none, if we except Zaccheus ‡. In a charge given to his diſciples, he expreſſly enjoined them not to go "into the way of the Gentiles, nor to enter into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael §." He conformed, upon all occaſions, to the Jewiſh ordinances, and enjoined the people to render obedience to the ſucceſſors of Moſes. His diſciples, however, after his death, not only preached the Goſpel in Samaria, but in every Heathen country; admitting the inhabitants to the rite of Baptiſm, and to the privileges of the diſpenſation which they publiſhed, without requiring them previouſly to ſubmit to the yoke of

* The Centurion, the Syrophœnician woman, and the Samaritan leper.

† Matt. xv. 24. ‡ Luke xix.

§ Matt. x. 5, 6.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

of the Moſaic law. Indeed they declared by a public edict, that circumciſion was not neceſſary to be obſerved by their Heathen proſelytes; and only required, that they would "abſtain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things ſtrangled, and from fornication*." In ſhort, the ſubſtance of their preaching had the effect of ſuperſeding that law, which had ſo long, and ſo juſtly been reverenced by the Jews; a law which a declaration of our Saviour† *ſeemed* to profeſs his intention of eſtabliſhing.

THIS difference between the manner, in which the Goſpel was firſt publiſhed by Chriſt, and that, in which it was taught by his diſciples, has furniſhed ſome unbelievers with an argument; in the refutation of which I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this very difference conſtitutes a ſtrong proof of the truth of our religion. I ſhall quote the objections, which have been urged on this point by Mr. Chubb, and by Lord Bolingbroke, and then proceed to reply to them, as well as to ſtate the proper inference from the

* Acts xv. 29. See, upon the concluding part of this verſe, Michaelis by Marſh, Vol. I. p. 178.

† Matt. v. 17.

the fact in queſtion.—Mr. Chubb affirms, "that the Apoſtles ſet out upon two principles, which may be conſidered as the foundation or corner-ſtone of the Chriſtian building. 1. That Chriſtianity is a ſupplement to Judaiſm, and therefore was to be grafted upon it; and that the law of Moſes was not to be aboliſhed, but ſtill continued. 2. That the Goſpel was a favour to be vouchſafed to the Jews only, and that to them only it was to be preached." And he pretends, that "the Apoſtles were unavoidably led into theſe principles by their Maſter himſelf:" but that "in a little time they quite changed the original ſcheme or plan of Chriſtianity; and dug up and deſtroyed the foundations they themſelves had laid:" and then he aſks, "How do we know in what inſtances they may be depended upon? and if they acted wrong in this, how does it appear that they ever acted right*?"

Lord Bolingbroke alſo repreſents Chriſtianity "as an inconſiſtent ſcheme." He maintains "that the New Teſtament conſiſteth of two Goſpels, the one publiſhed by our

* Poſthumous Works, Vol. II. p. 84, &c. See Leland's View of Deiſtical writers, Vol. I. p. 256. 5th Edit. 1788.

our Saviour himſelf, and recorded by the Evangeliſts, and the other by St. Paul."

He obſerves, that "Chriſt was to outward appearance a Jew, and ordered his diſciples to do what the Scribes and Phariſees, who ſat in Moſes's chair, taught: and that, when he commiſſioned his Apoſtles to teach and baptize all nations, he only meant it of the Jews diſperſed into all nations." He aſſerts, that "the myſtery of God's taking the Gentiles to be his people without ſubjecting them to circumciſion, or the law of Moſes, was inconſiſtent with the declarations and practice of Jeſus." He aſks therefore, "if this was the purpoſe of God, to take the Gentiles to be his people under the Meſſiah, how came it that the Meſſiah himſelf gave no inſtructions about it to his Apoſtles, when he ſent them to preach his goſpel to all nations? Why was the revelation of this important myſtery, ſo neceſſary at the firſt publication of the Goſpel, reſerved for St. Paul, who had been a perſecutor? Shall we ſay, that this eternal purpoſe of the Father, was unknown to the Son? Or that, if it was known to him, he neglected to communicate it to the firſt preachers of the Goſpel?" "He ſeems to think

think theſe queſtions unanſwerable, and that the *pertneſs* and *impudence* of the men, that pretend to account for theſe things, deſerve no regard *."

THESE writers plainly found their arguments upon the information they have derived from the books of the New Teſtament; alleging, in proof of them, the ſuppoſed ſilence of Jeſus Chriſt, as to thoſe material parts of the Chriſtian ſcheme, upon which it is allowed that the diſciples acted. It will however be diſcovered, upon an attentive examination of the ſacred volumes, that they muſt have been peruſed curſorily and ſuperficially by theſe objectors; ſince it appears, that thoſe parts evidently did belong to the diſpenſation, of which Jeſus was the author. The plan of that diſpenſation was arranged in ſuch a manner, that the firſt knowledge of it, and the firſt offer of the bleſſings attending it, ſhould be communicated to the Jews. Upon their rejecting the Goſpel, which was foreſeen and provided for by the Father of the univerſe, it was to be announced to all other nations; and from that period, (the neceſſity

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. pp. 305, 326, 328. See Leland, Vol. II. p. 185.

neceſſity for the peculiar inſtitutions of Moſes being done away), the principles of a religion, fitted for the acceptance of the whole human race, were to ſucceed. Conſiſtently with this deſign, the labours of our bleſſed Saviour were, during the ſhort time of his miniſtry, confined to Judea; nevertheleſs he revealed more fully the will of the Deity, and ſignified the greater extent of his plan, upon various occaſions, and in a very direct manner; inſomuch that any ſubſequent notification of this intention to his diſciples would have been unneceſſary, if their underſtandings had not been ſo darkened by worldly views, and obſtinate prejudices, that they were ſcarcely capable of comprehending the plaineſt declarations.

In order to examine this ſubject accurately and extenſively, it will be right to conſider the intimations, given by our Saviour, (ſometimes plainly and openly, but frequently in dark and figurative terms,) concerning thoſe particulars, in which this irreconcileable difference between his preaching, and that of the Apoſtles, is ſuppoſed to conſiſt. Nor can we commence this examination better, than by remarking the

pains he took to rectify the notions of his his hearers, reſpecting the kingdom of God.

WITH this phraſe, by a very natural aſſociation, were intimately connected thoſe wrong ideas, which the Jews entertained concerning the Meſſiah. Temporal bleſſings and national diſtinction were, in their opinion, the neceſſary concomitants of this long expected reign; to which was added ſome confuſed and indiſtinct conception of a deliverance from the conſequences of moral imperfection. Now the character of thoſe, for whom the glories of this kingdom were reſerved, would neceſſarily form a criterion, whereby to judge of it's peculiar nature, and diſtinct advantages. Our Lord therefore uſed a very effectual way to correct theſe miſtaken opinions, in the very outſet of his miniſtry, by declaring that the poor in ſpirit, that the mourners, that the meek, that the merciful, that the pure in heart, that the peacemakers, that thoſe which are perſecuted for righteouſneſs' ſake*, were they, to whom the kingdom of Heaven would be aſſigned—deſcriptions of perſons theſe, who are of all others the moſt unlikely

* Matt. v.

unlikely to attain honour or diſtinction in a kingdom, ſuch as the Jews vainly expected, and abſurdly wiſhed for. He afterwards expreſſly declared, that it would be almoſt impoſſible for the great men of the world* to render themſelves worthy of admiſſion into his kingdom. He intimated, that the ſervice of this kingdom was, at that peculiar juncture, not only productive of the greateſt inconveniencies, but alſo incompatible with an attention to worldly, and even domeſtic, concerns†. That the dignity, with which he was inveſted, and the titles, by which he was diſtinguiſhed, extended not to thoſe matters in which temporal authority is chiefly exerciſed, appeared by his peremptorily declining to take cognizance of a queſtion of worldly right. "Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you‡?" Upon another occaſion, when a queſtion was put to him upon this ſubject, fraught with all the erroneous notions then current among the Jews; he replied in a manner, which though it was not calculated to meet their wiſhes, yet ought to have convinced them of

* Luke xviii. 25. † Luke ix. 57, &c.
‡ Luke xii. 14. See Newcome, p. 467.

of their miſtake. "And when he was demanded of the Phariſees, when the kingdom of God ſhould come, he anſwered them and ſaid, The kingdom of God cometh not with obſervation, neither ſhall they ſay, lo here! or lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you *."

He however, who "knew what was in man †," was aware that his kingdom, thus explained, would be ſo far from meeting a ready acceptance on the part of the Jews, that on the contrary they would deſpiſe and reject it—ſo far from hailing him as their prince and deliverer, they would treat him as an outcaſt, and deſtroy him as a blaſphemer. And accordingly we find, throughout the New Teſtament, many declarations, more or leſs plain, from the mouth of Jeſus himſelf, upon this very ſubject. "The rejection of the Goſpel by the Jews, was foretold under the following parables: one, of a certain man who made a great ſupper, and bade many, and who was angry at the rude excuſes, which all unanimouſly ſent him: another of a king, who made a marriage-feaſt for his ſon, and who ſuffered not only the indignity of neglect, but the outrage

* Luke xvii. 20. † John ii. 25.

rage of having his ſervants ſhamefully entreated, and his beloved ſon ſlain *."

THAT the conſequence of this obdurate inattention on the part of the Jews would be the rejection of that nation from the favour and protection of God, was repeatedly and emphatically foreſhewn by our bleſſed Lord. I refer, for a variety of proofs, to the excellent work of Abp. Newcome †; and ſhall content myſelf with remarking upon this head, that our Lord's language, although highly figurative, was ſo well adapted to the comprehenſion of his audience, that after he had delivered an awful prediction of the miſeries, which were to fall upon that devoted nation, "the chief prieſts and the ſcribes, the ſame hour ſought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had ſpoken this parable againſt them ‡."

As the Jews, though the very people, for whom the Goſpel was primarily intended, and to whom it was firſt promulged, were prepared to ſpurn the gracious offer; our Lord

* Vid. Newcome p. 392. See alſo p. 198. and Luke xiv. 21. Matt. xxii. 7. and Luke xx. 9.

† pp. 199—203.

‡ Luke xx. 19. See the parallel paſſage in Matt. xxi. 45. and obſerve ver. 31. of the ſame chapter.

Lord pointed out, both by expreſs declarations and ſymbolic* repreſentations, that the good tidings of ſalvation would be more joyfully and gratefully received among other people. He diſtinctly taught, that the goſpel was to be preached among all nations†; and alſo that it would be received in ſuch a manner, as to ſecure to the Gentiles a preference in it's bleſſings over the ungrateful ſons of Abraham. Generally indeed he conveyed this, and other diſagreeable truths, under the form of parables‡; but that no doubt might remain of his meaning, he ſcrupled not to employ the moſt unequivocal declarations. Thus when he healed the ſervant of the centurion, "I ſay unto you, That many ſhall come from the eaſt, and the weſt, and ſhall ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven: but the children of the kingdom ſhall be caſt out into outer darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing

* See Newcome, 163, 165, 345.

† Matth. xxvi. 13. Luke xxiv. 47. Mark xiii. 10. Vid. Newcome p. 193. I refer to this writer, not only for the purpoſe of ſhewing, that the paſſages quoted are not ſtrained to the argument I have in view; but becauſe a frequent reference to this work will be of uſe to every one, who wiſhes to underſtand the New Teſtament.

‡ Newcome, p. 152.

ing of teeth *." He made a ſimilar declaration in favour of Zaccheus†: and he thus concluded a parable, which was addreſſed to the Jewiſh rulers. "Therefore I ſay unto you, the kingdom of Heaven ſhall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof ‡."

To us, who can examine our Lord's conduct and diſcourſes, abſtracted from the prejudices which infeſted the minds of the Jews, it may ſeem, that the tenour of his declarations upon topics, ſo cloſely connected with the preſervation, or deſtruction, of the Moſaic ritual, would have been ſufficient to point out, that it's end was then anſwered; and that, having effected the purpoſes, to which it was ſubſervient, it would of neceſſity terminate. The univerſality of the new diſpenſation, the qualifications of it's future members, added to the demolition of the temple at Jeruſalem, with the ruin of the Jewiſh polity, might have made a nation, not entirely blinded by former views, underſtand, that the law was to be abſorbed in the Goſpel. This however was not the caſe. It ſeems that they, who could bear

* Matt. viii. 11. See alſo Luke xiii. 28, &c.
† Luke xix. 9.
‡ Matth. xxi. 43. See Newcome, 192. 371. 387. 480.

allow themſelves with ſome degree of complacency to hear of the deſtruction of the temple, could not endure an intimation, levelled againſt the rites and ceremonies of the temple. Accordingly this was one of the moſt delicate points, upon which the diſcourſes of our Lord could turn: yet even this offenſive truth he did not entirely conceal, though he touched upon it with the utmoſt circumſpection. I muſt refer my reader upon this topic to a writer whom I have often had occaſion to commend, and will only cite his concluding obſervations. 'There are' certainly 'many occaſions, on which he ſpeaks honourably of the law. "Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil." I am not come to abrogate it prematurely and unnaturally; but to accompliſh it's typical and prophetical declarations, and to ſuperſede it by a law of grace and truth*. "It is eaſier for Heaven and earth to paſs away, than one tittle of the law to fail." "What is written in the law? How readeſt thou?" However he plainly intimates

* In what ſenſe the law of Jeſus Chriſt is eminently deſerving of this appellation, is ſhewn by Jortin, Diſcourſes concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 235, &c.

intimates the ſuperiour excellence of the Goſpel covenant. "Among thoſe that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptiſt: but he that is leaſt in the kingdom of God, is greater than he." When he obſerves that "all the prophets and the law propheſied until John," he aſſerts their ſubſerviency to the goſpel covenant. And when he ſays to the phariſees in another place, "The law and the prophets were until John," there is a very remarkable implication, that the ceremonial law ſubſiſted no longer to the members of the kingdom of Heaven. This was one of the truths, which his diſciples could not bear *.'

WHOEVER

* Newcome, p. 479. and loc. ibi citat. The ſentiment, with which the Archbiſhop concludes, is to be kept in mind continually, while we are peruſing the hiſtories of the Evangeliſts. For, however plain and obvious the intentions and profeſſions of Jeſus Chriſt may appear to us, yet it is certain, that the diſciples, from a mixture of prejudice and dulneſs, comprehended nothing of the Goſpel ſcheme, till after their Maſter's death: There was no point, which he explained ſo clearly, or repeated ſo often to them, as his own approaching ſufferings, and death, and reſurrection.—Yet how apparent is it, not only from the poſitive aſſertions of the Evangeliſts, but from the equally ſtriking evidence of their conduct at his apprehenſion, that they did not underſtand theſe plain and poſitive declarations! See Mark viii. 32. ix. 10, 32. "They underſtood not that ſaying, and were afraid to aſk him." Luke ix. 45. xviii. 34. "They underſtood none

WHOEVER conſiders the ſpirit of theſe various and concurring declarations, cannot, I think, maintain with any colour of reaſon, that, when Jeſus enjoined his diſciples, to "go and teach all nations," or as it is elſewhere expreſſed, to "preach the Goſpel to every creature*," he only meant it of the Jews, diſperſed into all nations†: or that, when they preached againſt the neceſſity of circumciſion, and the permanence of the law, they inculcated a doctrine, unauthoriſed by their Maſter, and inconſiſtent with the original plan of his miſſion. In fact, the ſcope and deſign of his undertaking cannot be delineated more perfectly, nor the conduct to be purſued by the Apoſtles pointed out more clearly, than in the words which he

none of theſe things; and this ſaying was hid from them; neither knew they the things, which were ſpoken." See moreover John x. 6. and xii. 16. If they manifeſted ſuch ſlowneſs of comprehenſion, and ſuch reluctance of aſſent, to poſitive and unequivocal aſſertions; it is not to be wondered at, that a ſimilar degree of ignorance ſhould prevail concerning matters, which did not at that time admit of ſuch clear and preciſe information. It deſerves to be remembered, that the marked expreſſions alluded to by Newcome, "I have yet many things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," were uttered only the day before his crucifixion, which plainly argues, that the more full information there hinted at, was to be conveyed at a time poſterior to his death. See John xvi. 12.

* Matt. xxviii. 19. and Mark xvi. 15.

† Lord Bolingbroke ubi ſup.

he addreſſed to them after his reſurrection. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem." And again, to remove, as it ſhould ſeem, the poſſibility of miſconception; in reply to a queſtion from one of his diſciples, which ſtrongly ſhewed the taint of their old prepoſſeſſions, he ſtill more particularly ſaid, "Ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me, both in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt part of the earth *."

IT

* Luke xxiv. 46. Acts i. 8. I cannot omit quoting one more paſſage from Abp. Newcome, on the admiſſion of the Gentiles into the Church of God—premiſing, however, that theſe declarations in favour of the Gentiles ſeem to me clearly to intimate, that the peculiar rites of the law would be abrogated. For what ſuch peculiar favour would be manifeſted to the Gentiles by a permiſſion to embrace the law of Moſes, which they were already enabled to do, whenſoever they choſe? But to admit them to the privileges and bleſſings of God's people, without impoſing at the ſame time the yoke of the Moſaic law, this was truly a bleſſing, worthy to be predicted by the Prophets, and to be diſpenſed by the Son of God. "This part of the divine counſels" (obſerves the Abp.) "is early mentioned in the Goſpels, to ſhew, that it was not an after-thought on the rejection of Chriſt by the Jews. It was referred to by Simeon, when the child was preſented in the temple. The appearance of the ſtar to the Arabian Magi, ſhewed that the Gentiles had an intereſt in the birth

It appears therefore manifeſt, from the conduct and the diſcourſes of Jeſus Chriſt, that the diſpenſation, which he announced, was intended for the reception and the advantage of the whole race of mankind; but that, in ſtrict conformity with the favour which the Almighty had hitherto ſhewn to the Jewiſh nation, they were to be the firſt objects of his care, the firſt partakers of his bounty. This preference was however fully explained to conſiſt in the order of time, not in the quality of the gifts. Accordingly the labours of the divine Saviour were confined to Judea; and there, as ſuited "the eternal purpoſe*" of the Godhead, his humiliation was complete, and his ſufferings were fully accompliſhed. But, notwithſtanding thatthe ſhort period of his miniſtry allowed him not to extend his perſonal ſervices to the Heathens; and that the circumſtances and ſituation of the Jews were ſuch as to render more plain and unequivocal marks of attention to other nations inconſiſtent with the ſucceſs of his miſſion; nevertheleſs we

birth of Chriſt: and John the Baptiſt alluded to the converſion of the Heathen, when he taught the Phariſees and Sadducees, that God was able of the very ſtones to raiſe children unto Abraham." p. 480. and loc. ibi. cit.

* Epheſ. iii. 11.

we find, that he took occaſion to explain the full meaning and purport of the Goſpel ſcheme, in terms not hard to be underſtood.

THIS conduct in every inſtance, as far as the difference of ſituation would allow, was imitated by his Apoſtles, and particularly by St. Paul.—After the aſcenſion of their Lord, they confined themſelves for a conſiderable time to Judea; and even when they went into foreign nations, they always addreſſed themſelves firſt to their own countrymen. Jeruſalem was the only reſidence of the infant church, for ſome period after the death of it's founder; and when a violent perſecution diſperſed the other members, the Apoſtles remained at Jeruſalem *. We are alſo told, that they, who were ſcattered abroad upon occaſion of this perſecution, though they "travelled as far as Phenice, Cyrus, and Antioch," yet preached "the word to none, but unto the Jews only †." That it was St. Paul's conſtant practice to addreſs himſelf in the firſt inſtance to the Jews, in every Heathen country, there is abundant teſtimony in the narrative of his actions, written by St. Luke ‡.

And

* Acts viii. 1. † Acts xi. 19.
‡ See Acts xiii. 5, 46. xvii. 2. xviii. 4, 6, &c.

And this ſame Apoſtle, who has been ſo unjuſtly accuſed of ſetting up a Goſpel of his own, in oppoſition to that of Jeſus Chriſt, though he ſtrenuouſly contends that there is no diſtinction between the Jew and Greek *, yet wherever a priority can be maintained, pleads in favour of the Jew: "to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile †."

HENCE it appears that, inſtead of any contradiction, the moſt complete harmony prevails, in reality, throughout the ſyſtem, as taught by Jeſus, and acted upon by his diſciples; nor is there any other difference, than what may be ſuppoſed very naturally to exiſt between the various parts of a comprehenſive ſcheme, which is gradually matured to perfection.

WE may now proceed to obſerve, that, if the Apoſtles had undertaken to alter the drift and deſign of the Goſpel from ſordid or ambitious views, as theſe unbelievers inſinuate, the alteration would in that caſe have been of a nature directly oppoſite. Or, if the deſign of Chriſtianity, as unfolded by

* Rom. x. 12. Galat. iii. 28.

† This is particularly to be noticed, when he is writing to the Romans. See c. i. 16. and ii. 9, 10. See alſo Acts iii. 26. What Dr. Campbell has urged on this point, deſerves attention. Preface to Matthew's Goſpel, ſect. 12.

by it's Author, was really what his adverſaries have repreſented; upon this ſuppoſition, no alteration would have taken place in the original plan, if they, who are now charged with ſubſtituting their own ideas, for thoſe of their Maſter, had acted with any ſiniſter intention. Inſtead of making the ſcheme more liberal, and enlarged; inſtead of carrying the benevolent and enlightened purpoſes of Jeſus ſtill farther; they would have cramped and narrowed it, or at leaſt confined it within it's firſt limits. They would have acted in conformity with their avowed notions, and prepoſſeſſions, not in direct contradiction to them. For if, when their Maſter was alive, and when they were in the habit of paying attention to his authority, they either did not, or would not, hearken to thoſe ſuggeſtions, which militated againſt their own feelings and opinions; it is not likely, that, when he was gone, and they were left to act and to think for themſelves, they ſhould carry into effect, with ſingular zeal and ardour, thoſe very ſuggeſtions.—If they had acted upon their own views of things, and followed the dictates of their own inclination, we ſhould not at this day hear them charged with any

intentional

intentional hoſtility towards their antient polity and inſtitutions; but we ſhould have found moſt undoubtedly, that, in this part of their conduct at leaſt, they would have reſembled thoſe of their countrymen, who remained ſo wedded to the rites and ceremonies of their forefathers, as to combine an adherence to the tenets of the Goſpel, with the moſt rigid obſervance of the law *.

THIS poſition follows ſo directly, from what, I truſt, has been eſtabliſhed in the foregoing pages of this work, that it is unneceſſary to dwell any longer upon the ſubject of theſe ill-founded objections. It remains for me only to deduce a more legitimate concluſion from premiſes more accurately ſtated: I ſhall therefore endeavour to prove, that the difference, ſuch as it is acknowledged to be, between the doctrines openly maintained, and acted upon, by Jeſus, and by his followers, forms in reality a very ſtrong preſumption, that the diſciples were not under the influence of errour, or any wrong impreſſion whatſoever; but that they

* Such were thoſe Chriſtians of Syria, who abandoned Peregrinus, becauſe he had eaten unclean meats. Παραιτησάμενός τι καὶ ἐς ἐκείνους, as Lucian contemptuouſly expreſſes himſelf, ὤφθη γάρ τι, ὡς οἶμαι, ἐσθίων τῶν ἀποῤῥήτων αὐτοῖς. Tom. II. p. 570. Amſtel. 1687.

they taught and acted from the honeſt and irreſiſtible impulſe of well grounded conviction.

It has been already granted, that the part of the Chriſtian Religion, which was carried into execution during the life of it's founder, appears narrow and confined in compariſon of the whole, which was gradually developed after his death. Now it is material to obſerve, that it was developed and unfolded in thoſe very points and circumſtances, which his followers were moſt unwilling to admit, or comply with, during his life time. The queſtion then which is propoſed to our examination, is this, How it came to paſs, that the conceptions of the Apoſtles were purified, and their ideas enlarged, upon the very points, in which, during their Maſter's life-time, they had been conſpicuouſly narrow and illiberal? Let us ſuppoſe for a moment, that our bleſſed Saviour was an impoſtor or an enthuſiaſt: when he was put to death, ſurely that fatal termination of his projects muſt have expoſed his artifices or his folly; and according to all human reaſoning, put an end to the deluſion of his followers, and at once cruſhed the party. But we find in

fact, that his credit, ſo far from ſuffering at his death, increaſed in luſtre daily; and his party, ſo far from being diminiſhed, accumulated in numbers, till it overſpread the world. Let us then make another improbable ſuppoſition—for indeed, upon any other ground of reaſoning, than the truth of Chriſtianity, it is neceſſary to ſuppoſe ſo many improbabilities, that it is far more rational, more truly philoſophical, at once to admit it—Let us ſuppoſe, that his followers, not angry, or diſappointed at the melancholy and unexpected termination of their perſonal and national hopes, conceived the ſtrange deſign of entering more fully into an impoſture, of which they themſelves had been the chief victims; and of adding to it a ſcheme of their own, by a dangerous and improbable tale, the falſehood of which might eaſily have been detected. We are to ſuppoſe them aſſerting, contrary to evident truth, that their crucified Lord was riſen from the dead, and aſcended into Heaven; and that they were commiſſioned to preach a doctrine, much more particular and explicit in every unpopular notion, than that taught by their Maſter; publickly declaring, that the neceſſity

ceſſity of circumciſion had then ceaſed; that the peculiar ſanctions of the Moſaic Law were no longer to be regarded; and that the Gentiles, who acknowledged the authority of Jeſus Chriſt, were to be admitted into the cloſeſt intimacy and communion. Upon what principle can we account for it, that theſe men ſhould enter ſo very fully into the peculiar views of their Maſter after he was dead, when they would not ſo much as hear them mentioned, when he was alive? Till the time of his death, they were "zealous of the law," and thought of the Meſſiah exactly as the reſt of their countrymen: after his death, they became careleſs of the law, and entertained quite a different notion of the Meſſiah from the reſt of their countrymen. Their ſentiments, their manners, their whole heart and mind underwent a complete change, without any apparent or adequate cauſe. Before the death of Jeſus, they were ſelfiſh, bigoted Jews, timid in their conduct, bent upon temporal good: afterwards they were moſt diſintereſted in their views, and liberal in their principles; in their actions they were courageous and deciſive, and devoted to nothing ſo little as temporal

good. They were then ready to endure, and actually did endure, every ſpecies of oppreſſion and ſuffering, in defence of opinions, and of conduct, which, during their Maſter's life, they would have looked upon with abhorrence. Such a change was never wrought in any ſet of men, ſince the world began, by the operation of human cauſes: and certainly intereſt, vanity, and national feeling, (motives theſe, to which the diſciples had ſhewn they were not inſenſible) theſe were all diametrically oppoſed to the conduct they then adopted. Now if any one ſhall attempt to reconcile theſe facts with the ſuppoſition, that the pretenſions of Jeſus Chriſt were founded in fraud or deluſion, he deſerves to be pitied for his credulity, or cenſured for his obſtinacy. For, in any ſcheme of impoſture, the whole plan would naturally be laid by the firſt contriver: and it cannot be doubted, but that Jeſus far outſhone his diſciples in abilities. He was the main-ſpring, the contriver of the whole, if there were any contrivance: and when he fell, the contrivance muſt have fallen with him. The diſciples had neither abilities, nor motives, to continue the fraud; and if they had,

they

they would certainly have acted ſomewhat in conformity with their former narrow and peculiar notions; and not have gone beyond their Maſter in the very ſentiments and practices, which were moſt adverſe to their own, as well as to thoſe of their countrymen. If we diſcredit the pretenſions of Jeſus, we muſt ſuppoſe him deſigning a plan, too extenſive and capacious, even for his aſſociates to act upon; for we find that he could not hint at what they thought the anti-Moſaic part of the ſyſtem, without exciting in their minds the utmoſt ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment. We muſt then ſuppoſe him to have been cut off, before he had ſufficiently gained over the minds of his followers to theſe peculiar notions, or even fully informed them what theſe notions were—and yet, after his death; when that death muſt, according to all human probability, have put an end to the plot, or at leaſt to any deſire in the Apoſtles to continue it; we find them on a ſudden not only completely inſtructed in what they had no means of knowing*, but at laſt ſtraining every

* The reader will bear in mind what has been ſaid before of the inability of the diſciples to comprehend their Maſter's meaning upon theſe peculiar ſubjects. It is this exact conformity

every nerve to accompliſh that deſign, which before had excited their antipathy.

So marvellous, ſo utterly unintelligible does the hiſtory of the origin of Chriſtianity appear, ſuppoſing it to have been the offſpring of miſconception or impoſture: but if we allow it's divine origin, every circumſtance and fact becomes not only poſſible, but in the higheſt degree probable and natural. We may admit the prejudices of the diſciples to have been as ſtrong, as they really were, during their Maſter's life: we may admit their wilful ignorance of the peculiar and enlarged doctrines of the Goſpel: we may admit them to have been diſappointed at his death, and deſpairing of his return to life: yet, if he really roſe from the dead; if he then inſtructed them more fully in all the doctrines of Chriſtianity, of which he had given them only hints before; and if he afterwards enforced and confirmed theſe doctrines by peculiar revelations; then the knowledge of the diſciples in thoſe points, of which before they were confeſſedly

formity between the alluſions and intimations of Jeſus himſelf, (which they confeſſedly did not underſtand, and which therefore could not have directed their conduct afterwards) and between that very conduct, ſo oppoſite to all their previous notions and prejudices, which conſtitutes ſo ſtrong a proof of the abſence of impoſture.

edly ignorant, and their zeal in thoſe matters, to which they had before expreſſed reluctance, are ſo far from being unaccountable, that it would be a matter of juſt ſurpriſe, had they acted in a different manner.

It appears therefore, that they, who have urged againſt the Chriſtian religion the objections before ſtated, have extremely miſtaken the grounds, upon which their arguments are reſted. The only improbability in this caſe can be, that the diſciples ſhould promote with ſo much ardour the enlarged and comprehenſive views of their Maſter, although, whenever thoſe views were intimated at an earlier period, they either "did not underſtand," or "could not bear" them. The only explanation, which can be given of this fact, at all ſatisfactory to my mind, is, that they were fully perſuaded of his reſurrection from the dead; and that his authority then, and not till then, had the effect of making them ſubmit their thoughts, and their actions, implicitly to his direction. Nothing ſhort of this can ſufficiently account for their proceeding to propagate the Goſpel doctrines after the death of Jeſus; and particularly, for propagating them in the

the manner, and to the extent, which are ſtated in the ſacred hiſtory *.

* I truſt, that the reader is now enabled fully to appreciate the value of ſome objections, or rather inſinuations, relative to this very ſubject, which are to be found in Mr. Gibbon's Hiſtory, Vol. I. pp. 455, 6. 4to. 1ſt Edit. They are not, in my opinion, deſerving of notice ſo much from their own importance, as from their connection with that very ſplendid monument of human induſtry and abilities. I wiſh I could add the praiſe of candour to that of learning and of talent, when I am deſirous of ſtating the merits of this celebrated performance: but whatever may be thought of the motives which led to his attack upon Chriſtianity, his mode of carrying on that attack has merited, and incurred, univerſal reprobation. See Mr. Porſon's admirable appreciation of Mr. Gibbon's merits, in Letters to Archdeacon Travis, preface, pp. 28, 29. See alſo White's Bampton Lectures, p.—153. The ſubject of the coincidence between the law and the Goſpel is ably treated in the Lectures, pp. 362—383.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE CHARACTER OF JESUS.

Malignity and extent of the charge, urged by unbelievers againſt the Chriſtian religion.—Particularly as it affects the character of Jeſus.—An objection againſt producing the teſtimony of his friends obviated.—Conceſſions of his adverſaries upon this point.—Vanini.—Chubb.—Bolingbroke.—Rouſſeau.—Voltaire.—Paine.—Gibbon.—Lequinio.—What the intentions of Jeſus muſt have been, according to the aſſumptions of his enemies.—Their own conceſſions ſhewn to be at variance with theſe aſſumptions.—Different grounds of argument, taken by unbelievers, examined.—The imputation of impoſture ſhewn to be inconſiſtent with the character of the virtues, which they allow him to have poſſeſſed.—Near inſpection, to which the conduct of our Lord was ſubjected.—Yet no inſtance of any deviation from moral rectitude.—Compared with Minos.—Numa.—Lycurgus.—Mahomet.—The ſcheme of Jeſus, if founded in fraud, leſs excuſable than thoſe of theſe acknowledged deceivers.—Conſequently not imputable to one of his good character.—Inquiry whether he could have been actuated by any good motive to aſſume falſe pretenſions.—anſwered in the negative.

THE adverſaries of Chriſtianity have been ever forward to accuſe it's friends of prejudice and bigotry, of a diſpoſition to impute improper motives to their opponents,

and of a diſinclination to hearken to the deductions of ſound reaſoning. It will be readily allowed that, in a ſtruggle for ſuperiority, combatants ſometimes overlook the real grounds of conteſt, and uſe improper weapons both of attack and defence. It is unavoidable that, in proportion to the real or fancied importance of every object in diſpute, the exertions of the contending parties ſhould be increaſed; and that, as they are more or leſs ſolicitous for the honour or advantage of victory, their paſſions ſhould be ſtimulated to a more or leſs violent degree of emotion. But it is not ſo generally true, as has been pretended, that the parties in religious diſputes are more virulent and intolerant, than where the cauſe of difference is wholly unconnected with theology*: nor if the fact be true, does

* My meaning will perhaps be better underſtood, if I cite a paſſage from Jacobus Facciolatus in his ſpeech upon the following ſubject: *Latina lingua non eſt ex Grammaticorum libris comparanda.*

Percurrite, ſi vacat, quæ ſolent homines libellorum ſuorum initio longiſſimè præfari, ubi cæteris, qui ante ſe de re grammaticâ ſcripſêre, diem dicunt; eorum lucubrationes mendoſas, nugaces, ſordidas, cloacinas (ſit verbo Scioppiano venia) audaciſſimè appellant; ſéque, ex Deorum immortalium ſede quaſi delapſos, allaturos optima pollicentur. Cúmque ſinguli et univerſi eadem recinant, quò ſe vertant miſeri adoleſcentes? cui ſe, tanquam duci, tradant germanâ latinitate inſtituendos? Numquid

does it caſt that excluſive opprobrium upon the cauſe of religion, which unbelievers have affected to conſider as properly reſulting from it. Undoubtedly however it is not

Numquid Varroni? at literarum porcus dicitur à Palæmone. Num Priſciano? at Græcum hominem Latinæ linguæ fucum feciſſe exiſtimat Alvarus. Num Vallæ? At ejus elegantias Ramirezius de Prado inelegantes appellat. Num Donato, num Probo, num Servio, num Chariſio? At hos omnes paſsim labi, et monſtra effutire contendit Scioppius. Num denique Scioppio ipſi? at miſerabilis literator dicitur ab Hornio, vir deſultoriæ levitatis à Labbeo, canis grammaticus à Lambecio. Indignamini ad hæc, Auditores! ſed artis, mihi credite, ſeu vitio, ſeu fato quodam fieri ſolet, ut nec ſua quiſquam afferre poſſit, niſi carpat aliena, nec aliena carpere, niſi modum excedat. Quàm indecoræ, quàm pudendæ, quàm propè inſanæ fuêre contentiones illæ Poggii cum Vallâ, Politiani cum Merulâ, Scaligeri cum Eraſmo, de rebus his minutiſſimis, quaſi de aris et focis! Quàm illa ridicula Franciſci Philelphi cum Timotheo quodam Græco, qui, de vi ſyllabæ pugnaturi, eâ lege in aciem ex compoſito deſcenderunt, ut victus barbâ mulectaretur! etc. Edit. Walchii, Lips. 1715. p. 9.

The learned reader is doubtleſs well acquainted with the vindictive and ſavage retort of Scaliger upon Muretus, in conſequence of the verſes, which Muretus ſent him as written by Trabeas, and which Scaliger publiſhed as genuine, in his Commentary upon Varro.

The general arrogance and intolerance of Scaliger, in the conduct of his literary controverſies, are very properly cenſured by Saxius in his Onomaſticon. Vid. Analecta Partis 3æ. Tom. III. p. 644. Traj. ad Rhen. 1780.

For the violence and indecorum of even philoſophical diſputes, we may appeal to Lucian, Bis Accuſat. Tom. II. p. 220. and Sympoſium, ſive Lapithæ, 633, &c.

Above all, we may remind thoſe, who inveigh with ſo much bitterneſs againſt Odium Theologicum, that the partizans in Political quarrels have never been diſpoſed to yield the palm, either for obſtinacy in opinion, vehemence in language, or illiberality in conduct.

not true, that the friends of religion can, with a greater degree of reaſon, be cenſured for the want of candour and moderation in ſupporting the important cauſe at iſſue, than it's antagoniſts. The very ground of all attacks upon the divine origin of the Goſpel, if we attend properly to the nature and extent of the charge implied, will abundantly illuſtrate and confirm theſe obſervations.

It is propoſed to confine the preſent inquiry to the proof reſulting from the moral character of our bleſſed Lord; and in the proſecution of it, after ſome preliminary remarks, the opinion of writers friendly to the Chriſtian cauſe will be noticed, and at the ſame time occaſion will be taken to meet an objection, which is frequently urged againſt the validity and impartiality of their concluſions; in the next place, the conceſſions of ſome hoſtile writers upon this important point, will be produced; whence, laſtly, it will be ſhown, that all the hypotheſes, which have been framed to account for the origin of the Chriſtian religion independently of it's truth, will be found utterly irreconcileable with the acknowledged excellence of Chriſt's moral character.

The

THE character of Jeſus, as it is ſet forth in the hiſtories of his actions without any apparent deſign on the part of the writers to compoſe a panegyric, is that of a man truly benevolent; endowed with every ſpecies of active as well as paſſive virtue*; and free even from the imputation of every improper motive, if we except the charge made by thoſe who deny his divine miſſion: and this, as it is the very point in conteſt between the friends and enemies of Chriſtianity, muſt not enter at preſent into the conſideration of ourſelves or our opponents.

PUTTING aſide then this ſingle point of aſſuming pretenſions, to which he had no juſt title, there cannot be a doubt but that Jeſus was poſſeſſed of exemplary virtue. And his good qualities are ſet forth, as I have had occaſion before to obſerve, not by any regular attempt at panegyric, but by a plain artleſs narrative of tranſactions, from which the reader is left at full liberty to draw his own concluſions. Patience under injuries, fortitude under ſufferings, humility, kindneſs, temperance, are ſtrikingly exemplified in his character: an honeſt indignation

* Chriſtus, ſays Le Clerc juſtly and forcibly, unicum omnium virtutum, veræque adeò conſtantiæ exemplar abſolutiſſimum. Ad Gen. xxvii. 34.

tion againſt vice, a generous contempt of hypocriſy, a manly feeling in behalf of every thing that is connected with honour and benevolence, are ſtrongly pourtrayed in his conduct. Nor is his doctrine leſs entitled to praiſe than his conduct: it reaches the very ſublimity of religious and moral excellence: it inculcates the noble leſſon of returning good for evil: it teaches us to love our neighbour as ourſelves: it tends to baniſh all low, ſelfiſh, and ſordid conſiderations; and ſo far from reſtraining our benevolent exertions to our friends or our country, it comprehends within the ſphere of our duty the whole race of our fellow creatures. But it may be ſaid, the character of Jeſus is drawn by his friends and aſſociates. Be it ſo. Yet if we cannot trace in their writings any ſymptom of partiality, any appearance of a wrong bias; if we cannot diſcover any mark of a wiſh to pervert, or to ſuppreſs the truth; we cannot, upon any principles of common ſenſe or juſtice, call their teſtimony in queſtion. And ſurely if any deſign of elevating the fame of their Maſter by undue repreſentations had exiſted, it is ſcarcely poſſible, but that the attempt would have been traced

traced by the diligence of thoſe, who have diſputed the truth of theſe accounts, and have endeavoured to aſſign reaſons for their incredulity. Had any ſuch intention been obſervable, no doubt it would have been pointed out long ſince by ſome of that hoſt of writers, who have ſupported the infidel cauſe. And if the repreſentations of the ſacred hiſtorians had not been founded in truth, were there not enemies *, virulent and powerful enemies, for a long time after the promulgation of Chriſtianity, in poſſeſſion of power and influence; ſo that the means of diſcovering the truth, had it been favourable to their cauſe, were in their own hands? The machinations of fraud, or the phantoms of imagination, have ſeldom, if ever, oppoſed themſelves with ſucceſs to the operation of human means, or the effects of worldly influence: and in this caſe, ſo eagerly as prejudice and power interfered to arreſt the progreſs of the Goſpel, it is not conceivable, how it could have ſucceeded againſt the native vigour of truth and virtue, as well as the pride of opinion and the force of authority. Yet notwithſtanding that

* This argument is handled by Prideaux, Letter to the Deiſts, pp. 153, 157, 163. Ed. 1723. This little tract contains much clear and forcible reaſoning upon the evidences of Chriſtianity; though it be not equally judicious throughout.

that the paſſion of it's adverſaries was thus invigorated by the arm of power, and the terrour of the ſword was combined with the "oppoſitions of ſcience" to cruſh the riſing ſect, no ſtigma has hitherto been ſucceſſfully fixed upon the reputation of it's founder; not a breath of ſlander ſullied it in the early days of Chriſtianity, if we except the calumnies of his Jewiſh perſecutors; and even infidel zeal has never preſumed to inſult it with any other reproach, than that of fraud or fanaticiſm. It has however been already remarked, that the juſtice of this reproach is the very point in queſtion between the defenders, and the antagoniſts, of our holy religion. It is not to be taken for granted by us, without adducing the ſubſtantial weight of proof for the aſſertion, that our bleſſed Saviour was incapable of the one or the other: nor are they to aſſume the contrary, without appealing to the ſame evidence of facts. It is incumbent upon both parties to collect from his general conduct, calling into their aid the teſtimony of friends, and the conceſſions of foes, how far it is compatible with reaſon and candour, to ſuſpect him of groſs errour or artifice. If the general character be determined,

termined, from any fair ſource of inveſtigation, to be ſuch as to render him liable to the charge of impoſture or enthuſiaſm, we may then conſider how far, in the alleged inſtance, the imputation be juſt, if, on the other hand, his general character and conduct clearly exempt him from the ſuſpicion of both, we may fairly call upon our adverſaries to abſtain from a charge, which is completely repelled by the general conduct, and not juſtified in the particular inſtance, where they are deſirous of fixing it.

THE character of our Lord is a ſubject, which has occupied the thoughts, and exerciſed the talents, of the wiſeſt and beſt men * in every age, ſince his religion was firſt announced to the world. It is a ſubject which could not fail to be inveſtigated by thoſe, who have profeſſedly conſidered how far his pretenſions, as a divine teacher, were founded in truth. Accordingly, they who have aſſerted, as well as they who have denied, that he was commiſſioned from on high, have ſcrutinized his actions with the moſt diligent and anxious care. The reſult of

* See the authors referred to in the preface to Abp. Newcome's Obſervations on our Lord's conduct, &c.

of the inveſtigations, employed by the former, is of courſe highly favourable to the character of Jeſus; ſince they could not otherwiſe have conceived him deſerving of the ſacred title of a prophet, authoriſed to communicate ſo full and ſo important a revelation of the will of God to his creatures. But notwithſtanding their belief in his divine miſſion, their authority is not to be neglected, nor the reaſons, upon which their concluſions are founded, therefore to be diſregarded—even by thoſe, who would take a ſurvey of the evidences of this religion, upon grounds the moſt impartial, and with views the moſt liberal. If indeed any ſymptoms of incapacity, of prejudice, of unfairneſs, appear in the courſe of their inveſtigations, we may then lay aſide their teſtimony; as we ſhould be juſtified, for the ſame reaſons, in laying aſide that of the hiſtorians, who ſupply materials for the inquiry. But if the writers, who have finally reſted their faith on the pretenſions of Jeſus, are not deſtitute of candour, of judgement, of fidelity; if they are not inferiour in theſe qualities to thoſe, who have eſpouſed the oppoſite party; their concluſions are entitled to our acquieſcence, and their authority

rity to our deference, as much as thoſe of any other writers, upon any other ſubject of ſcience or of morals. We might therefore boldly appeal to our adverſaries, whether they can diſprove the concluſions which Law, and White*, and Newcome have drawn in favour of the exemplary virtue of Jeſus. Nor ſhould the vulgar conſideration, that theſe writers were prieſts, and therefore intereſted in drawing the concluſions for which they have contended, detract from the weight of their obſervations, or the ſoundneſs of their arguments. If, as prieſts, they be ſuppoſed to lean towards the cauſe of a profeſſion, which is ſometimes attended with emolument or diſtinction; yet the mere wiſh to ſerve a particular cauſe would not enable them to eſtabliſh a poſition, which muſt look for ſupport to a ſeries of hiſtorical teſtimony. It would not enable them to wreſt facts to their purpoſe, which are inſcribed in the unvarying records of paſt ages; it would not enable them to ſuppreſs or diſtort evidence, which is interſperſed in the

* See Law's Reflections on the life and character of Chriſt. White's Bampton Lectures. Sermons IV. and particularly the Vth. See alſo Blair, Vol. V. Sermon III.

the writings of men of every party and of every country; it would not enable them to produce thoſe internal marks of truth and nature, to which they have appealed in confirmation of their opinions. Nothing but conviction could have impelled ſo many writers to handle the ſame ſubject, to place it in ſo many different lights, to ſupport it with ſuch unaffected zeal, and ſuch overpowering argument. We may moreover remark, that not merely prieſts of an eſtabliſhed Church, whoſe ſituation ſometimes leads to wealth and conſequence; but prieſts of every ſect—prieſts who have nothing to expect but oppoſition, if they are known; or poverty, if they are not known—nay, prieſts who have altogether abandoned their profeſſion—men in ſhort of the moſt diſcordant views, and hoſtile ſentiments, have ſtill ſupported with uniform conviction, and maintained with unvarying ardour, the truth of the Chriſtian diſpenſation. In this latter deſcription of writers, we may remark the names of Prieſtley, Wakefield, and Evanſon; of men, who differing from each other, as much as they diſſent from the national Church, yet upon the ſame general grounds of hiſtorical truth, admit the divine origin of Chriſtianity.

Nor

Nor muſt we fail to reply, if the objection ſhould ſtill be urged pertinaciouſly, that Laymen of the moſt diſtinguiſhed abilities, and of the moſt enlarged views, have in all ages vied with Churchmen in the pious and uſeful labour of fixing, upon the ſolid baſis of reaſon and of truth, the credibility of the Goſpel hiſtory. So far then as their ſtatements are built upon facts, and their concluſions logically deduced, there is no pretence for withholding aſſent to the arguments in favour of the character of Jeſus, though they chance to fall from the pen of a prieſt or a prelate. With the reſervation therefore of my right to avail myſelf of the labours of ſuch men upon this intereſting topic, yet I hold it needleſs to appeal to them*: though I anxiouſly wiſh the impartial reader to weigh, coolly and diſpaſſionately, the reſult of their inveſtigations. Such has been in

* I am aware that the character of Jeſus can only finally be aſcertained by a reference to thoſe original documents, in which his actions are recorded, and which are open to the inſpection of all ages and all parties; and that nothing is admiſſible upon the ſubject, that is not ſtrictly conſiſtent with, or regularly deduced from, their teſtimony. As however theſe documents have been conſulted with the utmoſt care, and quoted with the ſtricteſt accuracy, by the authors above referred to, particularly by Newcome; I thought it right to obviate any objections, which might have been urged againſt their authority; and to ſhew that they would have been equally worthy of attention, if the reſult of their inveſtigation had materially differed from that of their opponents.

in this inſtance the force of truth, that no material difference is obſervable in the judgement, which has been paſſed upon the character of our Saviour by his friends and his foes: at leaſt by ſo many of the latter, that it appears totally unneceſſary to enter at large into the reaſons, why that character is entitled to the genuine approbation of all, who have a moral taſte, or a virtuous ſentiment. Where parties, differing ſo widely in the general queſtion at iſſue, yet agree ſo cordially in a particular inſtance; we muſt either conclude that the caſe excepted is immaterial to the event of the cauſe, or that the force of truth is there too ſtrong to render it poſſible to be controverted. The teſtimony given in favour of Jeſus by profeſſed unbelievers is too oppoſite to their wiſhes, and too prejudicial to their efforts, to have originated in any thing but the ſtrength of evidence. They, who can trace in the Goſpel any marks of fraud or errour, cannot be blinded by any prejudice for the reputation of it's author, or entertain any prepoſſeſſion for the veracity of his hiſtorians. In theſe concurring ſtatements at leaſt we may preſume to expect genuine, unſophiſticated truth.

It ſeems unneceſſary to notice, on this occaſion, the early adverſaries of the Goſpel, any further than to obſerve, that the conduct of our Lord, as recorded by the ſacred writers, ſtands uncontradicted by any fact * whatſoever: ſo that the marks of impoſture or enthuſiaſm, if any ſuch there be, muſt be diſcovered in the books of the New Teſtament; where circumſtances are related with ſo little diſguiſe, as to give the writers at leaſt the appearance of intending to record nothing, but what really happened. The cavils and the inſinuations, as well as the conceſſions, of theſe antient and determined antagoniſts, I omit, becauſe they are fully collected in other books †: and becauſe

* The aſſertions of thoſe Jews, who were contemporaries with our Lord, that he wrought his miracles by the aid of Satan; and of thoſe in after ages, that he had learned magic in Egypt, and that he had ſtolen a ſecret name out of the temple, &c. ſcarcely deſerve notice, except to ſhew, how completely unavailing every attempt to ſully the reputation of Jeſus muſt prove; when thoſe, who had the fitteſt opportunity, and the moſt eager deſire, to impeach it, could find nothing to their purpoſe, but ſuch idle and improbable fictions. Indeed theſe charges rather confirm, than contradict, the facts related by the Evangeliſts. See Newcome, pp. 488. and 494.

† In addition to the collections of Sharpe and Lardner, Abp. Newcome has devoted a chapter to "the teſtimony which has been borne to our Lord's character by his enemies." p. 486. See an additional teſtimony to the ſame effect from Origen in p. 378.

becauſe their ſucceſſours in modern times have not only had recourſe to them for every engine of annoyance, but have even collected new materials for the attack from the ſtores of their own zeal and ingenuity. If any fact, or ſemblance of fact, had been ever diſcovered to detract from the character of Jeſus, theſe unwearied enemies would not have neglected to employ it. If there had been any pretence for impeaching the accuracy of the hiſtorians, or for derogating from the merits of their Maſter, we may be aſſured, they would not have made the conceſſions they have done. As then it is my anxious wiſh to ſupply an antidote againſt the effects of modern ſcepticiſm, my citations will be taken from ſome of the writers, who may fairly be conſidered as exerting themſelves moſt zealouſly, to collect the facts and arguments in defence of their favourite hypotheſis.

For the firſt of my vouchers to the purity of the motives, by which the conduct of the Author of Chriſtianity was actuated, I am indebted to the indefatigable Prideaux. "Vaninus (ſays he) one of the moſt zealous champions of impiety, that ever appeared againſt the Chriſtian cauſe (for he died a martyr for it) hath not attempted

tempted to find, in the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, any thing that ſavours of wordly intereſt. But after the moſt accurate and diligent ſearch, which ſo keen an adverſary could make, he was forced to give up the point; and plainly acknowledge that, in the whole ſeries of the hiſtory and actions of our Saviour, he could not find any thing that he could charge with ſecular intereſt or deſign, to blaſt him or his religion with *."

THE next authority that I ſhall quote is that of Mr. Chubb †, who expreſſes himſelf concerning our Saviour in the following terms. "In Chriſt we have an example of a quiet and peaceable ſpirit, of a becoming modeſty and ſobriety: juſt and honeſt, upright and ſincere; and, above all, of a gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour. One who did no wrong, no injury to any man; in whoſe mouth was no guile; who went about doing good, not only by his preaching and miniſtry, but alſo in curing all manner of diſeaſes among the people. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature, when in it's native purity and

* Letter to the Deiſts, p. 134.

† True Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. Sect. 8. pp. 55, 6. This is cited both by Law and Newcome.

and ſimplicity; and ſhewed at once what excellent creatures men would be, when under the influence and power of that Goſpel he preached unto them."

THE nature and tendency of the doctrines, taught by Chriſt, are repreſented in their true light very frequently by Lord Bolingbroke: and certainly they are ſuch, as could not have been invented, or inculcated, by any other than a really good man. He allows, that "the Goſpel is in all caſes one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity." He mentions "Chriſt's blaming his diſciples for being willing to call fire from heaven againſt the Samaritans: and that the miracles wrought by him in the mild and beneficent ſpirit of Chriſtianity, tended to the good of mankind*."

ROUSSEAU has commented with great force of expreſſion, and great juſtneſs of obſervation, upon the marks of truth, which appear ſo conſpicuouſly in the writings of the Evangeliſts, and in the character of their Lord. He has entered minutely into

* Leland's View of Deiſtical Writers. Let. xxxi. Vol. II. p. 177.

into a compariſon of Jeſus with Socrates, and juſtly argues, that the former was more deſerving of the praiſe of goodneſs and of wiſdom, than the latter—"Yes: (he concludes) if the life and death of Socrates are thoſe of a philoſopher, the life and death of Jeſus Chriſt are thoſe of a God. Shall we ſay, that the hiſtory of the Goſpel is invented at pleaſure? My friend, it is not thus that men invent; and the actions of Socrates, concerning which no one doubts, are leſs atteſted than thoſe of Jeſus Chriſt. After all, this is ſhifting the difficulty, inſtead of ſolving it: for it would be more inconceivable, that a number of men ſhould forge this book in concert, than that one ſhould furniſh the ſubject of it. Jewiſh authors would never have deviſed ſuch a manner, and ſuch morality; and the Goſpel has characters of truth ſo great, ſo ſtriking, ſo perfectly inimitable, that it's inventor would be ſtill more aſtoniſhing than it's hero*."

Even Voltaire, Voltaire ſo diſtinguiſhed for his avowed enmity to the name of Jeſus Chriſt, in order to account for the ſucceſs

* See the whole of this incomparable paſſage, Emile, Vol. II. p. 85. 1762. See alſo Newcome, p. 496. from whoſe tranſlation my quotation is taken.

ſucceſs of the Goſpel from human cauſes, is compelled to acknowledge, that his doctrine was pure, and his virtues conſpicuous. "If," ſays he, "Jeſus preached a pure morality; if he announced the approach of a kingdom of Heaven, for the recompenſe of the juſt; if he had diſciples attached to his perſon and his virtues; if theſe very virtues drew on him the perſecutions of the prieſts; if calumny cauſed him to die an ignominious death; his doctrine, preached with firmneſs by his diſciples, muſt have produced a very conſiderable effect upon the world *."

Mr. Paine, who is exceeded by no infidel writer, in want of decency and candour, and who certainly is not deterred by any ſcruple whatſoever from uttering any thing, however ſcandalous or offenſive, againſt the cauſe he oppoſes, yet in one part of his Age of Reaſon, profeſſes his "reſpect for the moral character of Chriſt;" and in another place, thus expreſſes his opinion concerning him. "Jeſus Chriſt founded

* Dictionnaire Philoſoph. Chriſtianiſme. Œuvres, Tom. xxxviii. p. 499. Baſle 1786. He enters much more fully into the character of Jeſus, whom he pronounces infinitely ſuperiour to Socrates; Traité ſur la Tolerance, Tom. xxx. p. 152, &c.

founded no new ſyſtem. He called men to the practice of moral virtues, and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy *."

Mr. Gibbon, whoſe zeal in the cauſe of infidelity was certainly not inferiour to that of Mr. Paine, though he has managed it with more addreſs, and indeed with more decency, yet has borne teſtimony in favour of "Jeſus of Nazareth," by recording "his mild conſtancy in the midſt of cruel and voluntary ſufferings, his univerſal benevolence, and the ſublime ſimplicity of his actions and character †."

Mr. Lequinio's atteſtation, in favour of the virtues of our Saviour, is ſo full and extraordinary, that I cannot better conclude this ſeries of evidence than in his words. He repreſents Chriſt as the wiſeſt and beſt man that ever lived, "one who was actuated by the moſt ſincere good will to all the human race, teaching the great principles of moral equity, and the pureſt patriotiſm; braving all dangers, oppoſing the great, deſpiſing alike glory and fortune, equally temperate with reſpect to himſelf, beneficent

* Age of Reaſon, part 1ſt, pp. 21, 59.
† Vol. I. p. 526 4to.

beneficent to others, and ſympathizing with all; hated by the powerful, whom he provoked; perſecuted by the intriguing, whoſe artifices he expoſed; and put to death by a blind and deceived multitude, for whom he had always lived. This generous philanthropiſt, "he ſays," who wholly ſacrificed himſelf to the publick good, who gave his whole exiſtence to the unhappy, and even to his perſecutors, never lied but to teach virtue*."

Upon a diligent ſurvey of the character of Jeſus Chriſt, I confeſs myſelf unable to diſcern a ſingle action which ſeems to be, by any obliquity of conſtruction, unfavourable to virtue. Indeed, the marks of goodneſs are ſo plainly ſtamped upon his character, that, as we have ſeen, it is pronounced unexceptionable by the moſt violent of thoſe, who have oppoſed his claims as a perſon divinely inſpired. No one therefore, without doing the utmoſt violence to candour and truth, can deny him to have been endued with more than ordinary virtue. It becomes then a queſtion between the advocates and the adverſaries of Chriſtianity,

* Prejugès Detruits, p. 286. quoted by Dr. Prieſtley, in his Letters to the French Philoſophers, p. 33.

tianity, whether it be not in the higheſt degree contrary to probability, that a perſon of eminent virtue could have contrived and executed ſuch a ſcheme of impoſture, as muſt be laid to the charge of Jeſus, if his pretenſions be not admitted? In order to reſolve this queſtion, it is evidently neceſſary to conſider, in what light this impoſture ought to be viewed. Whether it can juſtly be conſidered as a ſort of pious fraud, where the motives may ſeem to palliate the deſign; or whether, if it be a fraud, it be not attended with very groſs and aggravating circumſtances, and juſtly deſerving to be ſtigmatized as involving in itſelf peculiar baſeneſs.

JESUS CHRIST, according to the hypotheſis of our adverſaries, muſt have had it in contemplation to take advantage of the popular belief reſpecting the arrival of ſome great prophet among the Jews, and have made it ſubſervient to his own views of ſetting up as the teacher of a new religion, ſuperiour to that of Moſes. The ceremonial law he propoſed to aboliſh, as well as to confound the diſtinction which had hitherto prevailed between the Jews and Gentiles; all of whom it was his plan to incor-

incorporate into one maſs, acknowledging his authority, and profeſſing obedience to his injunctions. To effect theſe ends, he aſſerted that he was commiſſioned immediately from Heaven, being himſelf the Son of God; that he was inveſted with full authority to promulgate a new law, and to eſtabliſh a new covenant between the Creator of the univerſe and his creatures.

THIS is the ſcheme, which is ſo openly and conſtantly imputed to a Jew, and a man of acknowledged virtue. It is therefore neceſſary to examine minutely what this charge implies.

SURELY it implies that Jeſus, from conſiderations of intereſt or vanity, undertook to overturn a religious inſtitution, which had ſubſiſted for ages; which, from it's earlieſt date, was regarded by all his countrymen as having proceeded from God; and over which they univerſally believed that the Deity watched with peculiar care and jealouſy. It is more than probable, upon any ſuppoſition, that Jeſus himſelf entertained the ſame belief of the divine origin, and ſacred obligation, of the law of Moſes, as his countrymen: ſince it is not eaſy to conceive how any Jew, diſbelieving it's

it's divine authority, ſhould ſubmit to it's burthenſome rites and ceremonies, and encounter the contempt of the reſt of the world. Beſides, the Jews never were a thinking and ſpeculative people; nor are any marks of a diſbelief or rejection of the Moſaic law, founded upon an inveſtigation of it's pretenſions, and a conſequent conviction of their fallacy, to be traced in any period of their hiſtory prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. They have frequently deviated, from the rites inſtituted in honour of Jehovah, into the practice of ſuperſtitious and idolatrous obſervances; but this undoubtedly aroſe more from practical, than ſpeculative principles: they have been divided into ſchiſms; and, after the captivity, they are ſuppoſed to have incorporated, into their ſyſtem of religious opinions, ſome notions of the Chaldee ſages, and the Greek philoſophers. But it deſerves to be remarked, that, in no period of their hiſtory, did they adhere more ſtrictly to the letter of the Moſaic ritual; at no time did they guard more anxiouſly againſt every neglect or infringement of it's authority; than in the interval between their return from captivity, and the final deſtruction of their city.

Apoſtates from the religion of Moſes undoubtedly there have been ſome*; but theſe moſt generally of ſo infamous a character, that an accurate and candid hiſtorian takes occaſion to remark (as a ſingular circumſtance) of a perſon of this deſcription, that he was not diſtinguiſhed by any bad qualities †. A ſpeculative unbeliever ſeems to be a phænomenon unknown in their hiſtory ‡.

IT

* Gibbon's aſſumption upon this point is certainly gratuitous; and muſt be conſidered as one of the ſallies, in which he loved to indulge himſelf againſt all revealed religion, rather than as deſerving the attention due to an hiſtoric document. "It ſeems probable," he ſays, "that the number of proſelytes was never much ſuperior to that of Apoſtates." Vol. I. p. 452. 4to.

† On leur donna en ſuite un apoſtat pour gouverner: c'etoit Alexandre, Neveu de Philon Juif, qui avoit ſacrifié ſa Religion à ſes Intérêts; mais, il ne fut pas méchant, contre la coutume. Baſnage, Hiſt. des Juifs, Liv. I. c. 17. ſect. 5.

See an account of one who acted up to the general character, c. 19. ſect. 5.—It is important to obſerve, that many of thoſe Jews, who have abjured the religion of their forefathers, from ſome principle of intereſt or fear, have afterwards ſhewn that they acted againſt their own conviction, by returning to it at a time when their ſincerity could not well be queſtioned. See a remarkable inſtance of this in the ſtory of a Bohemian Jew, named Chagim, or Joachim, told by Wagenſeil, Tela ignea Satanæ, p. 188, &c. I am ſorry to remark, that the deſcription of the tortures, ſuſtained by this wretched Jew, is given with far too much complacency. The ſame author mentions another Jew, Julius Cunradus Otto, qui à Judaicis ſordibus per baptiſmum repurgatus, paulò poſt ad vetus volutabrum rediit, p. 119. For other inſtances of ſimilar converſions, ſee Mod. Univ. Hiſt. Vol. XI. pp. 7, &c.

‡ I muſt own, I conceived this repreſentation to be accurate, when I wrote it. But I have ſince found, that I muſt correct

IT is not therefore to be taken for granted, haſtily and without proof, that Jeſus diſputed the authority of the Moſaic law, and on that account had leſs ſcruple in introducing a form of religion, which he thought preferable to it. On the other hand to ſay, that, being himſelf a believer in the law of Moſes, he nevertheleſs attempted to ſuperſede it by one of his own contriving, is to aſſert that, which is highly inconſiſtent with the character of a man of ſenſe and of virtue. For it cannot by any means be thought credible, that a good man* ſhould embark in an undertaking, whoſe drift and deſign were to overturn a religion,

correct it. Mr. Collins, it ſeems, diſcovered ſome time ſince, that the Prophets under the law "were *great free-thinkers*," and that "they writ with as great liberty againſt the eſtabliſhed religion of the Jews (which the people looked on as the inſtitution of God himſelf) as if they looked upon it all to be impoſture." Leland's View of Deiſtical writers, Vol. I. p. 97.

Much as the 18th century has to boaſt in regard to new diſcoveries, there is nothing ſurely which can exceed this, either in novelty or ingenuity.

* Prideaux's ſecond mark of impoſture is, "that it can have none, but wicked men, for the authors of it." Letter to the Deiſts, p. 152. He afterwards conſiders the authors of ſuch impoſture, under the ſeveral claſſes of Atheiſts, Deiſts, and believers of an inſtituted religion: and he ſhews that, under either of theſe deſcriptions, they could not act from a good motive, nor conſequently be worthy the character of good men, p. 178.

religion, which he himſelf believed to be of divine authority.

AMONG the qualities, by which Jeſus is ſo peculiarly diſtinguiſhed, there is none which more attracts our obſervation and commands our applauſe, than a vigorous and fervent ſpirit of piety*, an entire reſignation to the will of God, an implicit ſubmiſſion to his pleaſure. Nor is there any principle, which he inculcates more earneſtly and more frequently upon his diſciples, than the neceſſity and propriety of having recourſe to God in prayer, of abſolute dependance upon him, of the moſt ardent love and filial awe toward him, of the moſt anxious and inceſſant endeavour to obey his will, and to promote his glory. The Being, whom he thus profeſſed to honour, and whom he enjoined his followers to adore, was undoubtedly the Jehovah of Iſrael, the ſource to which Moſes referred his authority, the founder of the civil and religious polity eſtabliſhed among the Jews. To ſuppoſe that Jeſus aſſumed a fictitious commiſſion, and forged imaginary credentials, from this ſupreme Being; that he poured forth his ſoul in prayer to him, whoſe

* Vid. Newcome, p. 341, &c. Law, p. 288. note.

whoſe name he was daily proſtituting to his own vain or ſelfiſh purpoſes; that he continually exhorted his followers to reverence and obey him, whom he himſelf was diſhonouring by a ſyſtem of fraud; that he acknowledged him as the Almighty Author of a diſpenſation, which he himſelf was endeavouring to abrogate; the omniſcient framer of laws, for which he intended to ſubſtitute the fruits of his own invention; this ſurely is to ſuppoſe him guilty of the blackeſt hypocriſy, as well as impiety. Yet this charge is plainly implied againſt the reputation of the bleſſed Jeſus by thoſe, who contend that he was engaged in a ſcheme of Impoſture. This charge, however, as well as all the others, which tend to impeach the integrity of his principles, or the purity of his motives, is directly contradicted by the whole tenour of his life; of a life ſpent in the exerciſe of his duties to God and man; of a life which, according to the conceſſions of the very men who urge the charge, itſelf repels and confutes it.

Supposing, however, for the ſake of argument, that he did not admit the authority of the Moſaic law; the mere charge of impoſture preſumes him to be guilty of a diſin-

a diſingenuouſneſs and artifice, inconſiſtent ſurely with "the ſublime ſimplicity of his actions and character*." Upon various occaſions he appeals to the authority of Moſes, as if he firmly believed his divine legation; and his frequent aſſertions, that he was acting under the immediate direction and expreſs will of the Supreme Being, plainly convict him of repeated and flagrant falſehoods, upon the infidel hypotheſis. Is it credible that any one, entitled to the appellation of good, would in this ſolemn manner have borne witneſs to an untruth; eſpecially when the utterance of that untruth was the ſpecific cauſe of his condemnation to a painful and ignominious death? After ſolemnly aſſuring the Roman governour that he was a King, that the pretenſions he had aſſumed were real, he adds in the moſt emphatic manner: "To this end was I born, and for this cauſe came I into the world, that I ſhould bear witneſs unto the truth†." Beſides, in ſupporting a complicated and difficult impoſture for ſo long a time, he muſt have had recourſe to ſuch a variety of ſhifts and evaſions, and muſt have

* Gibbon, Vid. ſup. pag. 253. † John xviii. 37.

have ſo habituated himſelf to the practice of fraud, as to deſtroy the tone of his virtuous feelings: and the difficulty of ſuſtaining an aſſumed character, in ſo public a manner, muſt have been ſuch, as at length to render ſome deviation from the truth too palpable to eſcape detection. Such certainly was the caſe with the prophet of Arabia, whoſe ſpecious profeſſions, and hypocritical demeanour for ſome time comported with the gravity of the character he aſſumed: but when he was emboldened by ſucceſs, he gave a looſe to his paſſions, and indulged himſelf in all the gratifications, which power could ſupply to his luſt and his ambition *. The mildneſs which he at firſt diſplayed, and the tolerance which, as he was compelled to claim, he was neceſſitated to preach, gave way to edicts and to practices of the moſt ſanguinary nature †: and the numerous contradictions, which, in ſpite of all his art, are palpably conſpicuous in the Koran, are poorly gloſſed over by the convenient

* Bampton Lectures, p. 194, &c. Sale's Prel. Diſc. p. 137. Prideaux, Life of Mahomet, pp. 82, 87, 115, &c.

† Bampton Lect. p. 190. Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 222. 4to. and the note, where he ſays very acutely, "This character alone may generally decide the doubts of the learned, whether a chapter was revealed at Mecca or Medina."

convenient doctrine of abrogation *. Nothing, however, of this kind, whether of inconſiſtency in conduct, or contradiction in doctrine, can be fairly alleged againſt our bleſſed Lord.

I AM willing to believe, that many of thoſe, who, without any reluctance, impute a fraudulent intention to the founder of our religion, are not ſufficiently aware of the extent, or enormity, of the moral turpitude, which the imputation involves. How far they are juſtified in urging this charge, without previouſly conſidering it's preciſe import, becomes to them a queſtion of deep and awful reſponſibility. Certain however it is, that unbelievers in general, without any ſcruple or heſitation, place our Saviour, as well as Moſes, in the ſame claſs with Numa, and with Mahomet, and with all thoſe, who have endeavoured to introduce their own inſtitutions among mankind, under the pretence of divine authority. Now the diſtinction, neceſſary to be made in theſe caſes, is, that Jeſus was unqueſtionably poſſeſſed of more virtue than any of the impoſtors, among whom he has been ſo preſump-

* Sale's Prel. Diſc. p. 66. Bampt. Lect. p. 359. and Jortin's Diſcourſes concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 142. not.

preſumptuouſly and indiſcriminately ranked; and that the ſcheme of impoſture, attributed to him, neceſſarily implies a greater deviation from rectitude, a greater abſence of moral principle, than that which is imputed to any of the others. If theſe two poſitions can be fairly and fully made out, as I truſt they will be, they will go very far towards eſtabliſhing the Chriſtian religion.

With reſpect to the ſuperiority of moral worth, I ſhall argue upon the broad baſis of hiſtorical truth, that there is no character upon record, particularly of thoſe, who have attempted, or effected, any great change in the opinions of mankind, which appears ſo virtuous as that of Jeſus Chriſt. This has been repeatedly proved by the friends of Chriſtianity, and it has been allowed by it's enemies, upon a compariſon with the very beſt of the Heathen philoſophers, Socrates*: and if Socrates falls ſo ſhort in an eſtimate of moral worth, even in the judgement of unbelievers, the firſt poſition will, I think, readily be allowed. Our conviction in this caſe will be ſtrengthened,

* Law, p. 331. Bamp. Lect. p. 212. See alſo Rouſſeau and Voltaire, ubi ſup.

ened, if we conſider that, notwithſtanding the brevity of the Evangelical hiſtories, there never was exhibited ſuch a minute delineation of character as thoſe authors have repreſented. He is placed before us in every poſſible variety of ſituation, in every emergency, on great, as well as leſs important, occaſions; the very avenues of the heart are, as it were, laid open; the motives of action, as well as the courſe of conduct, are circumſtantially related.

It was the remark of a great judge of life, that the moſt celebrated and diſtinguiſhed characters never appeared ſo eſtimable to thoſe, who had an opportunity of approaching them more nearly, and of obſerving them more narrowly *; when the caution, induced by the preſence of ſpectators, was removed, and the exertion, occaſioned by the deſire of gaining applauſe, no longer continued. Such a cloſe and frequent inſpection of the human conduct ſerves, like the power of an optical glaſs, to diſcover that which is latent, to enlarge that which is minute, to deform that which is beautiful. If however we apply the obſervation, which is ſo generally true of human

* Perſonne n'eſt un heros pour ſon valet de chambre.

human nature, to the narratives which contain the actions of Jeſus, his character, even when ſubjected to this cloſe inſpection, ſhews a luſtre equally unbroken, and a beauty equally regular. Admitted to all the familiarity of ſocial intercourſe, partners of his retirement, and witneſſes of his moſt trying hours, the Apoſtles relate every incident without diſguiſe; and from them we have a ſeries of facts, clearly illuſtrating the habits, and completely developing the character, of their friend and Maſter. Yet, amidſt all this variety of ſituation and accuracy of detail, the only impreſſions, left upon the mind of an unprejudiced reader, are thoſe of affection and of veneration for the tranſcendental virtues of Jeſus Chriſt. —Beſides this, we are always to bear in mind, that the very manner, in which theſe accounts are given, excludes the idea, that the character thus delineated was invented by the writers; or that they were poſſeſſed of the arts of ſelecting, embelliſhing, or ſuppreſſing certain facts, for the ſake of compoſing an elaborate panegyric. The way, in which theſe hiſtories are put together, evidently ſhews, not only that the authors were incapable of ſetting off any

ſubject by the arts of compoſition, but that they were careleſs of literary fame. If the memoirs of Socrates by Xenophon, the eulogium upon Ageſilaus by the ſame writer, the panegyric oration and that upon Evagoras by Iſocrates, or any of the writings, by which the later and degenerate Romans complimented their emperors, be minutely examined; the narratives of the ſacred hiſtorians will doubtleſs ſink in literary merit, but they will riſe conſiderably in that, which is much more important, the merit of recording truth. The former evidently ſhew a deſire of diſplaying their own abilities, as well as of gratifying the objects, upon whom this labour of intellect was beſtowed; the others have nothing ſo conſpicuous, as the wiſh of deſcribing accurately real tranſactions. And hence their teſtimony in favour of Jeſus is more juſtly to be valued, and regarded as undeniably true. Let theſe circumſtances be ſhewn to apply with the ſame, or nearly the ſame, propriety of adaptation to any human character, eſpecially to thoſe, with whom it is our object now to compare the bleſſed Jeſus. Let it be ſhewn, that their characters have been as minutely and as faithfully deſcribed, and that their

enemies

U CALIFORNIA

enemies have been unable to fix the ſmalleſt ſtain upon them; particularly let it be ſhewn of the artful and wary impoſtor of Arabia.

NOTWITHSTANDING, I contend that all, who at any time have endeavoured to impoſe upon the credulity of mankind by their own inventions, under the aſſumed ſanction of Heaven, are far leſs culpable, far leſs chargeable with moral imperfection (ſo far as their reſpective ſchemes of impoſture are concerned) than Jeſus of Nazareth would have been, if he had preached to his countrymen "a cunningly deviſed fable."

THE Heathen legiſlators * had no divine authority to ſuperſede, had no well eſtabliſhed inſtitutions to overthrow; and by alleging the authority of their gods in favour of their deſigns, they made uſe of an inſtrument, which it was compatible with the policy and ſuited to the genius of the times to adopt †. As they had no better

* Vid. Polyæn. Strategem. Lib. VIII. c. 4. And Valer. Max. Lib. I. c. 2. Prideaux has treated this topic upon ſomewhat different grounds, Letter &c. p. 174. See alſo Shuckford's Connection, Vol. III. p. 368.

† To confirm and illuſtrate this aſſertion, I muſt beg leave to quote a paſſage from a learned author, which did not fall into my hands, till after this chapter was written.—"It is obſerved by divers antients, but more largely inſiſted upon by Plutarch

better means of impreſſing upon the popular mind what they thought of importance to the general intereſt, they availed themſelves of a ſupport, which the ignorance and temper of mankind, in that ſtate of ſociety, ſeemed to make allowable, and, it ſhould ſeem, indiſpenſable. We may alſo remark, that the very nature of polytheiſm renders an appeal to one of it's numerous divinities leſs

Plutarch * than any other that I know, that for divers ages before Socrates, the natural temper of men was ſomewhat ecſtaticall; in their actions moſt of them tumid and high; in their expreſſions very poetical and allegorical; in all things very apt to be led by phanſie and external appearances, very devout in their kind but rather ſuperſtitious: in moſt things that they did, more guided by certain ſuddain inſtincts and raptures, than by reaſon; not out of any contempt of it, but becauſe they had it not. In thoſe dayes there was no moral philoſophy: and they were accounted worthy of higheſt honours, that could utter moſt ſentences that had ſomewhat of reaſon in them; which by other men were generally received as oracles, becauſe they ſeemed to ſurpaſſe the wiſdome of ordinary men.

There were as many religions almoſt as men; for every man's religion was his phanſy; and they had moſt credit and authority, that could beſt invent, and make beſt ſhew. Among ſo many religions there were no controverſies, but very good agreement and concord; but no reaſon uſed either to examine, or to diſprove. There was no talk among men, but of dreams, revelations and apparitions: and they that could ſo eaſily phanſy God in whatſoever they did phanſy, had no reaſon to miſtruſt or to queſtion the relations of others, though never ſo ſtrange, which were ſo agreeable to their own humours and diſpoſitions; and by which themſelves were confirmed in their own ſuppoſed enthuſiaſms."

Caſaubon on Enthuſiaſm, 12mo. London, 1656. p. 5. See alſo pp. 4. 174.

* Περὶ τῦ μὴ χρᾶν, &c. alibique.

leſs preſumptuous and leſs criminal, than where the one inviſible God, the only proper object of adoration, is called upon to ſanction the opinions, or promote the intereſts, of fallible man. Polytheiſm, by dividing and ſubdividing the eſſence and attributes of the Divine nature, not only ſeparates that which ought to be entirely ſingle, but contaminates that which ought to be moſt pure. As theſe ideal gods approached nearer in moral qualities to the imperfection of human beings, and were ſuppoſed to have local attachments and local intereſts, their interpoſition in human affairs appeared more probable, as well as more neceſſary; and therefore the pretence of it was aſſumed with ſcruple, as well as leſs guilt. Moſt certain it is, that the objects of Heathen worſhip are repreſented as interpoſing ſo continually in the conduct and concerns of mortals, in the ſerious compoſitions of tragic writers, and in the almoſt conſecrated works of their great mythological poet, that we may argue from this circumſtance, in the light both of cauſe and effect, to prove that a belief of their real interference prevailed very generally, and therefore was very generally employed. The fictions of Numa then and

Lycurgus

better me
lar mind
to the
ſelves
temp
ſeer
ſee
th
e

may be conſidered, if not quite
Leſs, as it is palliated by the peculiar
circumſtances in which they were placed—
Mahomet had not rendered his re-
adherence to a ſcheme of ſlaughter
and conqueſt, he might have been viewed
in a light not much more unfavourable.
For Mahomet ſome allowance may
reaſonably claimed. In a country, where
idolatry prevailed, the endeavour to intro-
duce a purer conception of the Divinity
was not wholly unworthy of praiſe. It is
true that Chriſtianity had exiſted in the
world for ſome centuries before his birth:
yet a barbarian of Arabia might be ſuppoſed
not to be well inſtructed in it's value. He
might not have had ſufficient opportunities
of comprehending it's real nature and excel-
lence: and indeed it appears extremely pro-
bable, that his knowledge of Chriſtian hiſtory,
at whatever time he gained it, was chiefly de-
rived from Apocryphal * books; which were
not likely to afford much ſatisfaction, or to
infuſe much conviction into any mind. Be-
ſides, the genuine doctrines of our religion
were

* Mr. Jones, in his valuable work upon the Canon, before
referred to, has ſhewn that this really was the caſe. Ap-
pendix to Vol. I. p. 451. laſt Edit. See alſo Dr. White's
Bampton Lect. p. 358. and note.

were at that period of time ſo much obſcured, and the practice of it's profeſſors ſo much vitiated *, that if he judged of it's truth and it's uſefulneſs merely from what he ſaw and heard, the moral guilt of ſuperſeding a divine inſtitution will be ſomewhat extenuated. Hence the faithful followers of Chriſt, though they unravel the wily deſigns of Mahomet, will abate of their inflexible rigour againſt him, while they ſee ſo much to lament and to condemn in the conduct of their fellow Chriſtians. Such believers, however impartial, will not indeed juſtify or defend the ſcheme of Proſelytiſm, which Mahomet followed up by the ſword; yet they will ſuggeſt that a robber † by habit, and an idolater by education, may ſeem entitled to ſome portion of the excuſe, which is ſo laviſhly indulged to thoſe, who, without the pretence of religion, have laid the world in ruins to gratify their pride and their ambition ‡.

NONE

* See Bampton Lect. pp. 60—73.

† The firſt attempts which Mahomet made, after his flight to Medina, were to plunder the caravans of Mecca. Prideaux, p. 71.

‡ The applauſe of mankind muſt ſurely ſeem to be conferred with little diſcrimination, and therefore to poſſeſs but little intrinſick value, when actions, nearly the ſame, and

NONE of theſe palliations will apply to ſuch a ſcheme of impoſture, as muſt be imputed to our bleſſed Lord by his raſh or malignant adverſaries. The diſpenſation, which the Goſpel ſubverted, had ſubſiſted for fourteen hundred years; was believed by an whole nation to be of divine authority; and, however abuſed by Jewiſh ſectaries, was unqueſtionably the beſt form of religion and of civil polity, then exiſting in the world. If Jeſus overturned this merely to eſtabliſh a code of his own fabrication, he cannot eſcape the charge of wanton impiety. If we add too the fixed conviction * of the Jews, that their national proſperity and happineſs depended upon their adherence to the commands of Jehovah, as delivered by Moſes, there appears a degree of raſhneſs and cruelty, in thus deſtroying the palladium of the Jewiſh ſtate, from which, on the infidel hypotheſis, the character of Jeſus cannot be exempted. Nor can he be regarded as more excuſable in the means

originating in ſimilar motives, have crowned Alexander and Conſtantine with the appellation of Great, while the names of Mahomet and of Julian are never uttered without the addition of Impoſtor and Apoſtate.

* This was not an haſty opinion, taken up from conjecture, or reſting merely upon tradition, but founded upon the expreſs declarations of the law. See Deut. xxviii. and xxx.

means he adopted, than in the ends he purſued, if the religion he eſtabliſhed had no other warrant for it's excellence or permanence, than the ſagacity of his own views, or the comprehenſion of his own intellect. The holy and venerable name of the Lord of heaven and earth was the cloak, upon this ſuppoſition, aſſumed as a cover to his fictions: and the intimate union and connection in which he boaſted of ſtanding related to the Deity, could only be an additional and unneceſſary outrage againſt the divine Majeſty. To deſtroy the inſtitutions of this auguſt and incomprehenſible Being, under the pretence of ſhewing him greater reverence; to do away the peculiar rites with which He had ſignified his command that his people ſhould honour him, under the fictitious aſſumption of authority from that very Being; eſpecially when we conſider the profound and unparallelled reverence entertained by all the Jews for that holy name, and thoſe ſacred inſtitutions; would have been a procedure at once ſo unaccountable and ſo deſperate, that it could ſcarcely be imputed to any man, however audacious and however reſolute in the proſecution of his purpoſes;—far leſs could

it be imputed to the meek and unaſſuming, the ſpotleſs and irreproachable Jeſus.

From theſe ſuppoſitions, groundleſs as every candid reader muſt ſurely be perſuaded they are, let us turn to the more pleaſing taſk of contemplating the character of our bleſſed Lord, as it is drawn in the pages of his faithful hiſtorians. A profound reverence for the ſacred obligation of the Moſaic law, and the moſt ardent devotion to it's Almighty Author; an inflexible attachment to truth, a rooted deteſtation of hypocriſy and fraud, eſpecially when concealed under the ſemblance of religion; a genuine love of that which is right and good, and the inceſſant practice of the moſt exalted charity, are conſpicuouſly marked in his conduct; the ſame amiable features adorn the tenour of his precepts; in teaching and in practiſing every ſpecies of virtue he lived, and in the cauſe of truth and benevolence he died. Is it poſſible ſuch a character as this, could have been concerned in ſuch a ſcheme of cunning, hypocriſy, and impiety?

If it be contended, that Jeſus acted only with a view of clearing the Moſaic law from the ſuperſtitions with which it was clogged, and the traditions with which it

was

was nearly overwhelmed, we may reply, that the aſſumption of ſuch falſe credentials cannot be made to agree with the honeſt, undiſſembling virtues of Jeſus—and that he plainly went farther than this ſuppoſition imagines, by introducing a ſyſtem, which virtually abrogated the whole ceremonial law, has, I truſt, been already proved*. If the doctrines of the Apoſtles accurately coincided with the views of their Maſter, and if they cannot be fairly charged with deviating from or altering the plan, upon which he acted, this objection at once falls to the ground. So that, if Jeſus be conſidered as entertaining the ſame opinion with the reſt of his countrymen concerning the origin of the law, the charge of fabricating the Goſpel will neceſſarily involve ſuch an abſence of moral principle, as is clearly incompatible with facts, which the moſt virulent of his adverſaries have acknowledged to be true.

I HAVE already conſidered the hypotheſis, that Jeſus might have been an unbeliever in the divine legation of Moſes; and I have endeavoured to ſhew, that even, upon this hypotheſis, improbable and abſurd as it is, his

* Chapter V.

his conduct would be completely at variance with his general allowed good character. It ſeems therefore only neceſſary to notice that one remaining refuge of our opponents; the ſuppoſition of his acting from certain good motives, which it is next to impoſſible to define or even to conjecture; motives, which our adverſaries have contented themſelves with aſſerting, while they have always omitted to explain how they can poſſibly be made conſiſtent with his general conduct, and indeed how they can be applicable to the particular inſtance where theſe motives are ſuppoſed to have operated. Mr. Lequinio has expreſſed this capital argument very conciſely, and indeed as clearly as the idea appears capable of being conveyed. He aſſerts, that "Jeſus lied only in the cauſe of truth." The futility of this imagination is ſo well expoſed by a late writer, that I muſt beg leave to tranſcribe his words.

"Was ever a character in romance more unlike any thing in nature than this? And yet this was an ordinary Jewiſh carpenter, who had no advantage of education, or knowledge of the world. This man, Mr. Lequinio ſuppoſes, without any thing ſupernatural

natural about him, to have acquired this moſt extraordinary ſuper-human diſpoſition, a generoſity and magnanimity exceeding that of all the heroes and philoſophers of antiquity, to have converted thouſands of his countrymen to the belief not only of his being a prophet, or a man inſpired of God, but even the Meſſiah, whom before this they had univerſally expected would be a King and a conqueror, and that, after dying in the moſt public manner, he roſe from the dead, as he declared beforehand he ſhould do, in confirmation of his divine miſſion.

"If a perſon of ſo excellent a moral character could be a mere impoſtor; if a man with ſo few natural advantages could deceive ſo many of his countrymen, all previouſly diſpoſed to reject his claim, and enable them to deceive ſo many more of all nations, we muſt ſay that nature, neither before nor ſince that time, ever produced ſuch men to deceive or to be deceived*."

There are many other conſiderations, which render ſuch a ſolution of the difficulties, attending the origin of Chriſtianity, much more hard to be admitted, than any difficulty,

* Letters to the French philoſophers, ubi ſup.

difficulty, which it is intended to remove. A good man, and a man of ſenſe, which Jeſus is by all parties allowed to have been, before he embarked in ſuch a ſcheme, would undoubtedly look a little to the probability of it's ſucceſs: and from the ſtate of the Jewiſh minds, little elſe was to be expected, but the deſtruction of the contriver. He would alſo take into conſideration the probable miſchief, as well as the probable good. The unſettling of the faith of an whole nation, the extirpation of their ancient inſtitutions, he muſt know, could not be accompliſhed without much ill will, without producing feuds and factions, and their neceſſary conſequence, bloodſhed; particularly in a nation, ſo eaſily agitated, and ſo furious in it's paſſions*, as that, to which this unpopular ſcheme of reformation was addreſſed. Of this indeed Jeſus plainly intimated that he was fully aware, when he warned his followers of the ſufferings they muſt needs undergo for diſſeminating his doctrines—when he pointed out the unhappy diviſions, which would take place in the boſom of families, in conſequence of the ſyſtem he was eſtabliſhing—and when, in the moſt unequi-

* Joſephus, paſſim.

unequivocal terms, he avowed, "Think not I am come to ſend peace on earth: I am not come to ſend peace, but a ſword*." He goes farther than this; he not only anticipates the evils ariſing from the propagation of his doctrines, but ſeems to expreſs, what upon the hypotheſis of our adverſaries might be called, a criminal unconcern, how ſoon they ſhould take place. "I am come to ſend fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled†?" A good man would not venture upon a ſcheme, which he ſaw was to produce ſo much actual miſery; nor would a man of ſenſe ſo openly profeſs to his converts his knowledge of theſe effects; without looking much further into future conſequences, than a mere man can be ſuppoſed to do. Unleſs therefore we allow Jeſus the character of a prophet, that is, unleſs we admit the truth of his pretenſions, we muſt accuſe him both of raſhneſs and cruelty for hazarding ſo much actual evil for the ſake of poſſible eventual good; and we muſt confeſs that his conduct is utterly inexplicable, in placing before thoſe, whom

* Vid. Matt. x. vv. 17—26. 34, &c. xxiv. 9, 10.
† Luke xii. 49, &c.

whom he wiſhed to gain over to his party, ſuch an unfavourable repreſentation of the tendency and effects of his new inſtitution. The whole tenour of his character, which diſplayed the moſt conſummate prudence, as well as the moſt tender ſympathy for the ſorrows and miſeries of man, forbids us to aſſign the leaſt degree of probability to the ſuppoſition, againſt which we are contending.

THERE are beſides ſeveral other difficulties ſpringing out of the hypotheſis—Why, for inſtance, if good were the object for which our Lord contrived his plan, ſhould he aſſume ſuch high and extraordinary pretenſions, as, combined with his appearance, could ſerve only to diſguſt the minds, and ſhock the prejudices, of his countrymen? Why ſhould he at the ſame time ſeem even to court that appearance of poverty and humiliation, equally in contradiction to *his own* pretenſions, and to *their* expectations? Why, if he embarked in the fraud from ſuch a motive, ſhould he purſue a courſe of conduct, which would infallibly expoſe him in a ſhort time to the envy and cruelty of the rulers, and quickly abridge his means of doing any more good? To what purpoſe, in fine, were

thoſe

thoſe repeated declarations of his own death, and his predictions of riſing again? Why were that death and that reſurrection, not merely ſtated as events that were to happen, but incorporated into the whole ſcheme of his religion? Are theſe only to be conſidered as the fictions of his followers, when the cauſe began to prevail after his death?—If ſo, let the writings be proved forgeries, or let the writers be convicted of falſehood! But till either the one or the other of theſe attempts be made with ſome ſucceſs, we may conſiſtently argue from them as facts, ſupported by ſuch a body of evidence, that thoſe who moſt wiſh to diſprove, are conſtrained in a great meaſure to allow them.

WITH whatſoever ſpecioufneſs therefore the charge of errour or of fraud may appear to be directed againſt Chriſtianity, it will, upon due examination, be found to impute ſuch a want of candour, of integrity and piety, ſuch a dereliction of moral principle, to the author of the ſuppoſed impoſture, as cannot, with any ſhew of fairneſs or probability, be laid to the charge of any man really good. Even in the acknowledgment of his enemies, the character of Jeſus exceeds the uſual meaſure of human

excellence; conſequently, by their confeſſion, the accuſation, which is levelled againſt his religion, is wholly inapplicable.

So great is the inconſiſtency, to which the imputation of fraud againſt the founder of our religion expoſes thoſe who urge it; and it is well worth their conſideration, whether ſimilar repugnancies to moral probability do not exiſt in every objection, which ſtrikes at the divine origin of the Goſpel.—For my own part, I cannot but expreſs my moſt anxious wiſh, that every ſuch objector would maturely weigh the whole extent to which his arguments lead, the difficulties with which they are embarraſſed, and the contradictions in which they are involved. I am ſatisfied that, after a full and impartial enquiry, the violations of credibility, neceſſarily ariſing out of any infidel ground of objection, will be generally acknowledged to be much more numerous, glaring, and offenſive, than thoſe which the moſt captious antagoniſt can repreſent, as neceſſarily ariſing out of a belief in the Goſpel hiſtory.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GODWIN'S MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND THE CHARACTER OF IT'S FOUNDER EXAMINED.

Paſſage from Mr. Godwin's Enquirer quoted.—The charges, contained in it, reduced to three heads.—1. That bigotry and intolerance are encouraged by the Chriſtian religion, —2. That an improper ſtreſs is laid upon faith.—3. That there are certain moral defects in the character and temper of Jeſus Chriſt.—Each of theſe charges examined ſeparately—and confuted, partly by hiſtorical documents—partly by a critical inquiry into the texts, Mark xvi. 16, Matth. xxiii. 33.—This writer ſhewn to have miſunderſtood or perverted them.—A fair deduction made, from the ſubjects of the preceding inquiry, in favour of Chriſtianity.

AMONGST the few, whoſe moral feelings have been ſo little in uniſon with thoſe of the reſt of mankind, as to lead them to impeach the character of our bleſſed Saviour, is Mr. Wm. Godwin. In his publication called "The Enquirer," the following

following very remarkable paſſage is introduced *.

"THERE is nothing perhaps, that has contributed more to the introduction and perpetuating of bigotry in the world, than the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion. It cauſed the ſpirit of intolerance to ſtrike a deep root, and it has entailed that ſpirit upon many, who have ſhaken off the directer influence of it's tenets. It is the characteriſtic of this religion, to lay the utmoſt ſtreſs upon faith. It's central doctrine is contained in this ſhort maxim, "He that believeth, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not, ſhall be damned †." What it is, the belief of which is ſaving, the records of our religion have left open to controverſy; but the fundamental nature of faith, is one of it's moſt unqueſtionable leſſons.—Faith is not only neceſſary to preſerve us from the pains of hell; it is alſo requiſite, as a qualification for temporal bleſſings. When any one applied to Jeſus to be cured of any diſeaſe, he was firſt of all queſtioned about the implicitneſs of his faith; and in Galilee, and other places, Chriſt wrought

* Pag. 322—3. † Mark xvi. 16.

wrought not many miracles, becauſe of their unbelief *. Never were curſes poured out in a more copious ſtream, or with a more ardent and unſparing zeal, than by the meek and holy Jeſus upon thoſe, who oppoſed his pretenſions †. The ſhort and comprehenſive deſcription beſtowed upon the refractory to the end of time, appears to be this, "they have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil ‡."

WITHOUT depreciating the general talents of this writer, I may be allowed to lament, that one, who profeſſes to ſearch after truth, ſhould have ſo widely miſtaken the object of his reſearches: and without deciding upon his motives, I may fairly call in queſtion the accuracy of his ſtatement, and the juſtneſs of his concluſions, upon a moſt important topic—ſo important indeed, that I make no doubt of obtaining the pardon of my readers, for examining theſe objections in a ſeparate chapter.

THE ſubſtance of the accuſations brought by this writer againſt the Goſpel, and it's bleſſed Author, may be comprized under three heads, viz.

I. THE

* "Matthew viii. 13. ix. 28, 29. xiii. 58. Mark v. 36. ix. 23. xi. 23, 24. John xi. 40. xx. 29."

† "Take, as an example, Matthew xxiii. 33."

‡ "John iii. 19."

1. THE bigotry and intolerance, ſanctioned by the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion.

2. THE improper and unwarrantable ſtreſs laid upon faith.

3. CERTAIN moral defects in the character and temper of Jeſus.

1. THIS author is ſo eager to fix the odious charge of bigotry upon the Chriſtian ſyſtem, that he ſeems to repreſent ſuch a ſpirit as not having been introduced into the world, till this religion aroſe to diſcover and to cheriſh it. It appears then that he is ignorant of the bigotry of the Egyptians; between two of whoſe tribes an animoſity aroſe, from a difference in religious ſentiments, which cannot be characterized in ſtronger terms, than in thoſe which the ſatyriſt has employed.

> Inter finitimos *vetus atque antiqua* ſimultas,
> Immortale odium, et nunquam ſanabile vulnus
> Ardet *adhuc**.

IT may be, that he has forgotten the glowing picture, which the ſame poet has drawn of the conſequences of a bigotry, with which the ingenuity of malevolence itſelf cannot ſlander Chriſtianity, as having the

* Juvenal, Sat. xv. 33. See vv. 78, &c.

the moſt remote connection. It may be, that he has paſſed ſlightly over a ſcene, from the barbarity of which human nature almoſt recoils—in which however an infidel hiſtorian, with perfect conſiſtency, finds only "ſome obſcure traces of an intolerant ſpirit*."

If, without the authority of the Areopagus, any one had attempted to introduce the worſhip of a ſtrange god, the laws of Athens aſſigned death for his puniſhment †. But

* Gibbon, c. ii. not. (3.)

† Joſeph. c. Apion. ii. 37. Νόμῳ δ' ἦν τοῦτο παρ' αὐτοῖς (Αθηναίοις) κεκωλυμένον, καὶ τιμωρία κατὰ τῶν ξένον εἰσαγόντων. θεὸν ἄρισ̣ο θάνατος.

See Weſſeling's note on Petit's Legg. Att. p. 69. Even Mr. Hume has ſhewn his tenderneſs to the religions of antiquity, when he ſays, that "except the baniſhment of Protagoras, and the death of Socrates, which laſt event proceeded partly from other motives, there are ſcarce any inſtances to be met with in antient hiſtory, of this bigoted jealouſy, with which the preſent age is ſo much infected*." I readily agree, that other conſiderations, beſides thoſe of religion, actuated the perſecutors of Socrates; but if impiety had not been made the pretext, his countrymen would not have put him to death: and this circumſtance, it became the candour of Mr. Hume, to point out. I muſt further obſerve, that Mr. Hume paſſes in ſilence over the caſe of Anaxagoras, who certainly was compelled to quit his country, becauſe he was accuſed, or at leaſt ſuſpected, of impiety. Diogenes Laertius is content with telling us περὶ τῆς δίκης αὐτῷ διάφορα λέγεσθαι; but the δίκη, to whatever extent it might go, evidently

* Eſſay on a Particular Providence, and a Future State. Vol. II. p. 149.

But were a ſimilar ſeverity to be employed by any Chriſtian ſtate, it would be imputed not merely to the policy of governours, but to the temper of prieſts.—The odious bigotry of Antiochus Epiphanes * will not eaſily eſcape the recollection of any, but of thoſe who will impute no fault, nor arraign any crime, except it be found to involve in it's conſequences the friends of revealed religion.—Had the law which was inſcribed in the xii. tables, Peregrinos Deos ne colunto,

dently was on account τῆς ἀσεβείας αὐτῦ. According to Plutarch, he was not condemned, nor even regularly accuſed; but, by the advice of Pericles, he left Athens, for the purpoſe of avoiding accuſation. That advice however was given in conſequence of the law, which Diopithes had propoſed to the people; (εἰσαγγέλλεσθαι τὰς τὰ θεῖα μὴ νομίζοντας) and which alarmed Pericles for the ſafety of Anaxagoras. Vidend. Plutarch. in Vit. Periclis. See alſo the whole chapter in Joſephus above cited; in which many inſtances of intolerance amongſt the antients, and particularly the Athenians, are ſtated and commented upon.—Reſpecting the charge brought againſt Anaxagoras, conſult Mitford's Hiſtory of Greece, c. xxii. ſect. 3. Vol. V. p. 141. 8vo.

* 1 Maccab. i. 41. I am unwilling to urge the conduct of Cambyſes, when he ſtabbed Apis, and ordered the prieſts to be ſcourged, and put the leading men at Memphis to death. See Herodot. B. iii. c. 29. The vexations of Cambyſes from his misfortunes probably had produced a phrenſy, and that phrenſy burſt out in acts of violence, where intolerance was plainly mixed with impiety and revenge. It is however impoſſible to exonerate the Perſian Magi, or Xerxes who acted under their direction, from the charge both of intolerance and fanaticiſm. Nec ſequor magos Perſarum; quibus auctoribus Xerxes inflammâſſe templa Græciæ dicitur. Cic. de Legg. lib. ii. ſ. 10. Edit. Erneſti.

lunto *, been conſidered as the edict of a Chriſtian prince, we ſhould probably have heard the loudeſt complaints againſt the ſpirit of bigotry, by which it was dictated: and if the demolition of the temple of Serapis and Iſis had been effected by the order of an eccleſiaſtical ſynod, inſtead of an heathen ſenate, it would doubtleſs have been ſtyled an atrocious outrage upon the unalienable rights of private judgement, inſtead of being repreſented as proceeding from the uſe of "a common privilege," and aſcribed to the "cold and feeble efforts of policy †." But it is particularly remarkable, that a ſpirit of intolerance ſhould be repreſented as owing it's introduction to Chriſtianity, when the violent means which were adopted for the purpoſe of cruſhing this very religion, at the time when it's profeſſors are univerſally acknowledged to have been both inoffenſive and unambitious, are too well known to be controverted. The force of hiſtoric truth is in this inſtance too powerful to be ſuppreſſed, or evaded: upon this occaſion therefore, the Hiſtorian, who would

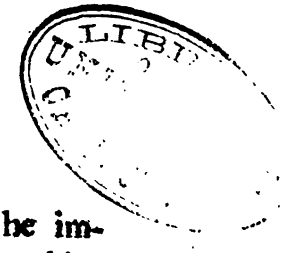
* Separatim nemo habeſſit Deos; neve novos, ſive advenas, niſi publicè adſcitos, privatim colunto. Cicer. ibid. ſect. 8.

† Gibbon, Vol. I. p. 33. and not. (15.)

would gladly co-operate with any plauſible attempt to injure Chriſtianity, muſt be brought forward to oppoſe the ſtatement of his zealous co-adjutor in the cauſe of infidelity.—Mr. Gibbon admits, that "the religious policy of the antient world ſeems to have aſſumed a more ſtern and intolerant character, to oppoſe the progreſs of Chriſtianity. About fourſcore years after the death of Chriſt, his innocent diſciples were puniſhed with death by the ſentence of a proconſul of the moſt amiable and philoſophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor, diſtinguiſhed by the wiſdom and juſtice of his general adminiſtration. The apologies which were repeatedly addreſſed to the ſucceſſors of Trajan, are filled with the moſt pathetic complaints, that the Chriſtians, who obeyed the dictates, and ſolicited the liberty, of conſcience, were alone, among all the ſubjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auſpicious government*."

So far a check is put upon the aſſertion of Mr. Godwin with reſpect to the *introduction* of bigotry. But the zeal of the Hiſtorian does not allow him to continue long the

* Vol. I. p. 519.



the advocate of the Church, ſince he immediately ſeizes the opportunity of making the following obſervation: "From the time that Chriſtianity was inveſted with the ſupreme power, the governours of the Church have been no leſs diligently employed in diſplaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their Pagan adverſaries."

STILL however the Hiſtorian does not keep pace with the Philoſopher. Conſiſtently enough with their different provinces, the former ſatisfies himſelf with diligently remarking the facts, which in his opinion diſgrace the cauſe of Chriſtianity, while the latter more boldly aims his attack at it's very principles, and at once endeavours to ſtrip it of all pretence to a divine origin, by declaring that the odious ſpirit, of which he complains, is countenanced in it's doctrines. Upon this ground alſo we are ready to meet him; and here it is obvious to remark, that he has been led into the vulgar errour of confounding the principles of the Chriſtian doctrine, with the miſtaken notions and corrupt practices of ſome, who have profeſſed themſelves bound to obey that doctrine implicitly. That too many individuals and even parties, ſtyling themſelves Chriſtian, have

have deviated from the ſpirit of their religion ſo completely as to encourage bigotry and practice intolerance, is certainly true; but that ſuch doctrines or practices are authorized by Scripture, we are warranted by it's whole tenour in denying. If Mr. Godwin will take the pains to learn or to recollect what the national ſpirit of the Jews was, and what their inveterate prejudices, before Jeſus appeared among them, and will then remark all that *he* did to enlarge their minds and purify their hearts, that his doctrines were thoſe of the moſt unbounded philanthropy, and his life one uniform ſcene of benevolence; Mr. G. will bluſh at the charge he has adduced againſt the Chriſtian religion, and the character of it's founder. Jeſus, who firſt pronounced a bleſſing upon the merciful and peace-makers, who inculcated the return of good for evil, who enforced, in the moſt authoritative and perſuaſive manner, the virtues of humility, mutual forgiveneſs and univerſal good-will, could not preach a religion of bigotry and intolerance. He, who rebuked his diſciples, when they would have called down fire from heaven upon the inhoſpitable Samaritans; who himſelf healed the wound, which had

had been inflicted in his defence by the unſeaſonable zeal of one of his followers*; he, who taught the rejection of the Jews, and the admiſſion of the Gentiles into the Meſſiah's kingdom; he, who breathed out a prayer for his murderers, when they were piercing his body with the inſtruments of torture†; he ſurely has thus taught the moſt effectual leſſon againſt every ſpecies of bigotry and intolerance. Nor is it merely by the force of his example, and the obvious ſenſe of his precepts, that he fully repels the odious imputation; but the manner, in which his religion was offered to the acceptance of mankind both by himſelf and by his diſciples, abundantly ſhews how foreign from it's nature is every thing, which partakes of a deſire to prevail with any other weapons than thoſe of truth and reaſon.— Far from requiring aſſent to aſſertions deſtitute of proof, far from expecting conviction without the legitimate means of enforcing it, Jeſus ſupported his claim to the character he

* Compare Luke xxii. 51. with Matt. xxvi. 52. "Chriſtianity" (obſerves Newcome) "is very far from promiſing a ſpecial protection to thoſe, who have recourſe to violence and arms, in ſupport even of truth and right." p. 283. How different is this from the ſpirit of Mahometaniſm and of Popery!

† See Newcome, pp. 390. 439.

be aſſumed, by a ſeries of cloſe and connected reaſoning *,—which prejudice indeed did reſiſt, and ſophiſtry may ſtill elude, but which can never be addreſſed in vain to men of ſober and diſpaſſionate judgement. The inſtruments which reaſon is accuſtomed to uſe in the ſearch or the defence of what it conceives to be truth, were employed by Jeſus to confound the petulance, to correct the miſtakes, and to enlighten the underſtanding of his adverſaries. Indeed it is impoſſible for the moſt captious infidel to ſuggeſt any fair and adequate mode of demonſtrating his divine miſſion, which was not at ſome time or other produced in the ſight, and in the hearing, of the Jewiſh people. The diſciples exacted not a blind obedience from thoſe whom they addreſſed; but they reaſoned from the prophecies contained in the Scriptures, and enforced their arguments by the evidence of facts. "With great power gave the Apoſtles witneſs of the reſur-

* In the Sermon on the mount, Matt. capp. v. vi. and vii. are many admirable ſpecimens of cloſe reaſoning and logical inference, as alſo, in the xiith chapter of the ſame Evangeliſt. In St. John however are to be found the greateſt variety of inſtances, in which the force of argument is directly applied to eſtabliſh the divinity of Chriſt's miſſion. See chapters iii. 11, 20. v. 31, 39. vii. 18. viii. 46, 54. x. 25, 34, &c. xiv. 10. 29. xv. 24.

reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus."—"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three ſabbath days reaſoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Chriſt muſt needs have ſuffered, and riſen again from the dead." Nor muſt we forget the generous encomium which is paſſed by the ſacred hiſtorian upon the Jews of Berea, not for acquieſcing without examination, nor for aſſenting without inquiry, but becauſe "they received the word with all readineſs of mind, and ſearched the ſcriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo*."—To the ſame effect are many paſſages in the Epiſtles of the firſt propagators of the Goſpel. St. Paul, after enjoining his proſelytes to examine themſelves whether they be in the faith, openly makes this acknowledgement; "we can do nothing againſt the truth, but for the truth." In the character of a Biſhop, drawn by the ſame Apoſtle, he is deſcribed to be, "Holding faſt the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by ſound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainſayers†."

St.

* See Acts iv. 33. xvii. 2, 3. and 11.

† Mr. Wakefield's tranſlation of this verſe expreſſes the ſenſe of the original ſtill more clearly. "Keeping to the

St. Peter alſo exhorts to the ſame effect: "Be ready always to give an anſwer to every man, that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you with meekneſs and fear *."

THUS we ſee that Jeſus and his diſciples, in publiſhing the Goſpel, propoſed and adopted the criteria, to which recourſe muſt be had in the inveſtigation of all truth. They appealed to the convincing evidence of facts, and enforced that appeal by the powers of reaſoning. They brought forward teſtimony, which it was competent to their antagoniſts to diſprove or object to, if there had been any grounds of objection; and they reaſoned in defence of the concluſions they formed from ſources, which it was equally in the power of their hearers to examine and to underſtand. And as if for the expreſs purpoſe of guarding againſt a too haſty aſſent, they urged their inveſtigation of thoſe ſources of information, and praiſed as noble the conduct of thoſe men, who ſearched the ſcriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo. Now ſurely no conduct

true doctrine which he hath been taught, that he may be able to encourage *ſome* by wholſome inſtruction, and confute *others* who contradict." The words τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον, appear to me to mean, that ſeries of facts and doctrines, which formed the ſubſtance of the Apoſtles' preaching, and was entirely worthy of credit.

* See 2 Cor. xiii. 8. Tit. i. 9. 1 Pet. iii. 15.

duct can be more free from the ſuſpicion of artifice, or the imputation of bigotry. To lay your claims to aſſent fairly and fully before the world, to deſire that they may be ſcrutinized with all poſſible exactneſs, and to expect acquieſcence only as you have the means of enforcing conviction, is a proceeding ſo equitable and reaſonable, that it might be thought no one could refuſe ſuch a cauſe the hearing, and ſtill leſs object to it as containing in it's principles the odious ſpirit of intolerance.

WHETHER therefore we look to the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion, as publiſhed by it's author, or as enforced by his friends and followers; or whether we conſider the manner, in which thoſe doctrines were offered to the general acceptance of mankind; it is ſurely impoſſible not to acknowledge, that the charge of *introducing* bigotry into the world is directly contradicted by the moſt unequivocal teſtimony, that hiſtory can ſupply: and with reſpect to the charge of *perpetuating* it, I ſcruple not to aſſert, that there is not, in the whole compaſs of the New Teſtament, a ſingle paſſage, upon which it can be founded, without bidding defiance to all the eſtabliſhed laws of ac-

curate interpretation.—Such is my conviction upon the queſtion of fact; and it well deſerves to be remarked, that, having ſo few worldly means for propagating his religion, Jeſus would have acted a moſt unwiſe and inconſiſtent part, in encouraging that intolerance, which muſt have alarmed his hearers for the ſafety of their own favourite tenets, and determined them to reſiſt, even with violence, the introduction of any other.

Mr. Godwin's aſſertion ſhall now be brought to a fair iſſue; ſince he has produced what he conſiders as ſome authority for it, which may properly come under our conſideration, when treating of the ſecond article of charge, viz.

The improper and unwarrantable ſtreſs laid upon faith.

"It is the characteriſtic of this religion," he ſays, "to lay the utmoſt ſtreſs upon faith. It's central doctrine is contained in this ſhort maxim, He that believeth, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not, ſhall be damned."

From the manner in which this text is introduced, as well as from what follows, it is apparent that this writer affixes to the word *damned* the vulgar ſenſe it has obtained

tained in the Engliſh language. Now certainly a writer, ſo ardent in his profeſſions for the cauſe of truth as Mr. Godwin, is the very laſt perſon, who ought to ſupport any poſition, and particularly one of ſuch infinite conſequence, by the miſapplication of a tranſlation*.—Surely he might have known, and knowing he ought to have ſtated, that neither πιςεύσας, nor σωθήσεται, nor καταχριθήσεται has the narrow and confined ſenſe, which is neceſſary for the ſupport of his argument. That they who reject the Goſpel, when propoſed to them with ſuitable evidence, will be expoſed to condemnation; while thoſe, who receive and practiſe it, will enſure a bleſſing, is certainly the poſition, and the only poſition, contained in this paſſage. The poſition itſelf is founded upon the principle, that Chriſt was

* Mr. Godwin, I underſtand, was for ſome time teacher of a diſſenting congregation in Suffolk; and whether he did, or did not believe the Goſpel, while he taught it, we may preſume that, in the courſe of his education or of his miniſtry, he ſometimes had occaſion to conſult the writings of learned interpreters. Is it poſſible then, that he ſhould be unacquainted with the various explanations of the word, which, in the common Engliſh Bible, is tranſlated *damned*? The ſame obſervation may be extended to Mr. Godwin's probable knowledge of the different ſenſes, given to the word *ſaved*. Was it mere forgetfulneſs then, that theſe different interpretations of two ſuch important words were unnoticed, when he wrote "The Enquirer?"

c

was divinely commiſſioned, and inveſted with proper credentials. It ſurely is not to be imagined, that the Almighty would make and announce a diſpenſation to his creatures in ſuch a manner, that they would be altogether juſtified in refuſing it, or left quite at liberty to refuſe it from inattention, or from obſtinacy, or from pride, or from malignity, or from ſecular conſiderations of intereſt and power. God addreſſes us as a Being, who knoweth what is beſt for us, and hath a right to our obedience when he claims it. If therefore he preſcribes our duty to us, affording at the ſame time ſufficient evidence, that the important leſſon is taught under his immediate authority, man is certainly accountable to him for the motives, which have led him to reject that leſſon. What the condemnation thus incurred is, we are not preciſely informed in this text, as the term uſed in the original is exceedingly comprehenſive: it certainly implies our being liable to ſome puniſhment; and that puniſhment certainly will be inflicted in exact proportion to the degree of our guilt. But that guilt will vary with the nature and number of the opportunities which we have had for obtaining infor-

information, and with the motives, which may have induced us to diſregard it. Theſe however are circumſtances, which it is not for *fallible* man to judge of, but for *Him* only, by whom we ſhall all be judged at the laſt day! Theſe obſervations I ſhall beg leave to ſtrengthen by producing the words of an excellent commentator upon the language of the New Teſtament. ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς) *Qui religionis meæ doctrinam ſuſceperit, et baptiſmo ſe ei obſtrinxerit.* Πιστεύειν hìc, ut ſæpè, ſignificat *religionis doctrinam cognitam ſuſcipere cum aſſenſu, et conſtanti propoſito ſtudióque præceptis ejus obſequendi.* Vid. Act. ii. 44. iv. 32. xvi. 34. Tit. iii. 8. Hinc ipſa religionis doctrina nominatur πίστις, 1 Tim. iv. 1. Epiſt. Jud. ver. 3, 20. Eſt igitur hîc πιστεύειν idem quod μαθητεύεσθαι, diſcipulum ſectatorémque Chriſti fieri, Matt. xxviii. 19. σωθήσεται) *Salutem conſequetur*; liberabitur à pœnis peccatorum, à ſuperſtitione, erroribus et vitiis; ad cognitionem veritatis, ad veram virtutem et felicitatem æternam perveniet. Hæc enim omnia iſta vox complecti ſolet. ὁ δὲ ἀπιστήσας) Non autem credens Evangelio, quod ipſi annunciatum fuerit. κατακριθήσεται) Retentione peccatorum, et ſuppliciis æternis majoribus, quàm

quàm quæ eos manent, quibus hæc doctrina non eſt annunciata *.

Mr. Godwin thus ſtates another inſinuation to the prejudice of the Goſpel. "What it is, the belief of which is ſaving, the records of our religion have left open to controverſy." To this a brief and plain reply may be made. No one acquainted with Scripture, will heſitate to pronounce, that the belief, required, in "the records of our religion," is the belief, that "Jeſus was indeed the Chriſt, the Saviour of the world †" —"the Chriſt, the Son of God, which ſhould come into the world ‡."—"That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent ‖," is pronounced to be "eternal life," even in that ſolemn and affecting addreſs, which our Redeemer poured forth to the Father, juſt

* Roſenmüller ad locum. Mr. Godwin has choſen not only to treat this as an univerſal propoſition, but to take the terms of it in their moſt offenſive ſignification. It is plain, that the meaning of the terms admits of conſiderable qualification; and I wiſh him to conſider, whether the circumſtances, under which theſe words were uttered, do not require, that ſome further limitation ſhould be fixed to the propoſition itſelf.

† John iv. 42. ‡ John xi. 27.

‖ John xvii. 3. See moreover chapters, i. 49. iii. 15, &c. v. 46. vi. 29, 35, 40, 47, 69. vii. 31, 38. viii. 30, 31, 46. ix. 35—38. x. 25, 42. xi. 25, 45. xii. 11, 42, 44, &c, xiv. 10, &c, xvi. 9, 27, 30.

juſt before the commencement of his ſufferings. Whatſoever controverſy may have been ſtirred about the meaning of theſe paſſages, it will, I apprehend, be an extremely difficult taſk, for the ingenuity of the moſt prejudiced unbeliever, to prove, that the fault lies in the ambiguity of the records themſelves.

"THE fundamental nature of Faith," continues Mr. G. "is one of the moſt unqueſtionable leſſons of the the Goſpel." "Faith," he further obſerves, "is not only neceſſary to preſerve us from the pains of hell: it is alſo requiſite as a qualification for temporal bleſſings. When any one applied to Jeſus to be cured of any diſeaſe, he was firſt of all queſtioned reſpecting the implicitneſs of his faith; and in Galilee, and other places, Chriſt wrought not many miracles, becauſe of their unbelief."

I HAVE before* examined, how far it was

* See Chapter iv. of this work. I am happy in finding myſelf enabled to ſtrengthen the obſervations made in that chapter, by ſome extracts from a work, which I had not the good fortune to meet with till very lately. The book, to which I allude, is entitled, "An Eſſay on the Character of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts: deſigned to prove that they were not Enthuſiaſts, &c. by the Rev. Richard Graves, B.D. Junior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin."

was proper, and even neceſſary, for a teacher ſent from God to inſiſt upon faith as a previous

"It may be neceſſary here to remark," (obſerves this candid and judicious writer) "that the ſeries of miracles, which our bleſſed Lord performed, was decidedly above every poſſibility of being accounted for by any enthuſiaſtic deluſion, or any force of imagination in the perſons, on whom theſe miracles were wrought: a ſuſpicion, which has been ſometimes raiſed, from our Lord's appearing to require faith in thoſe who were healed, and from it's being recorded, that he could not, or would not, work mighty works at Nazareth, becauſe of their unbelief. But even in thoſe caſes, which have given occaſion to this ſuſpicion, from our Lord's requiring faith before he conferred his miraculous favours, one obſervation, which has not, I think, been ſufficiently attended to, ſeems to me to prove to a certainty, that it was not becauſe the ſucceſs of the miracle, in any degree, depended on this faith. We uniformly find that our Lord required faith, only in the perſon, *at whoſe requeſt* the miracle *was vouchſafed, not* at all *in the patient on whom it was wrought*, except he applied *in perſon* for the cure. Thus, when the nobleman, whoſe ſon was ſick at Capernaum, applied to our Saviour at Cana of Galilee, to come down and heal him, for he was at the point of death; our Lord anſwers him, 'Except ye ſee ſigns and wonders, ye will not believe. But go thy way, thy ſon liveth. And the man believed, and went his way.' Now, could the force of imagination in the father, heal the abſent ſon?"—p. 14. This author then proceeds to conſider the caſe of the centurion at Capernaum, Matt. viii. 5—13. then, thoſe inſtances, in which he refuſed miracles to the Phariſees, who ſought a ſign; to Herod; and to the Nazarites. "In all theſe caſes" (he ſays) "the Son of God *would not* gratify the vain and unreaſonable expectations of ſome, or waſte his miracles on others, who deſpiſed both him and them; for he *could not* do this conſiſtently with the dignity of his office, and the object of his miſſion, which was calculated to try and exalt the moral character of men, by ſupplying abundant evidence to the fair and humble inquirer, without extorting the aſſent of the wilfully blind and obſtinately negligent, or violently ſubduing to a reluctant ſubmiſſion, the incorrigibly vicious and perverſe.

"Thus

vious moral qualification, without which ſupernatural aid ought not to have been imparted. To beſtow the extraordinary bounty of Heaven upon thoſe, whoſe prejudices and vices rendered them unworthy of the ordinary gifts of Providence, and to multiply the means of conviction to them, ſo as to control their aſſent irreſiſtibly, might be ſaid to imply a greater regard for the unjuſt than for the juſt, and would ill accord with the character and pretenſions of him, whoſe high prerogative and expreſs office it is, to "reward every man according to his works." Theſe conſiderations have however been ſo fully urged, that I truſt Mr. Godwin's inſinuation has ſo far been antici-

"Thus it was, that the want of faith prevented our Lord from diſpenſing his miraculous favours; but never did the benign Jeſus, when implored, refuſe to exerciſe his ſupernatural power in relieving miſery; and in no inſtance did he ever attempt to exerciſe it without full ſucceſs; while in the objects, and in the manner of the operation, he conſtantly diſplayed a juſt ſelection and calm dignity, utterly inconſiſtent with the extravagance of fanaticiſm." p. 17.

Mr. Graves concludes his obſervations upon this ſubject in the following note. "Finally, in all inſtances, when faith was required, it was from thoſe, who deliberately and voluntarily applied to our Lord. Now if ſuch applications proceeded from idle curioſity, or inſincere hearts, ought they to have been complied with? was not therefore an avowal of their ſincere faith, natural and reaſonable, before our Lord would exert his divine power in their behalf?"—p. 284.

anticipated and refuted. Yet I am deſirous of remarking further, that the objection, as here made, plainly intimates, that faith was inſiſted upon to aid the work of impoſture which was carrying on: or in other words, that no miracles were attempted to be wrought by Jeſus or his followers, until the imaginations of thoſe around them were previouſly diſpoſed to be perſuaded of every thing, which they were told they ought to believe. If ſuch were the intent, for which this diſpoſition of mind was inculcated as indiſpenſable, ſurely theſe workers of miracles were not very expert in their trade of deceit, ſince they have themſelves plainly and without ſcruple confeſſed the only arts, to which they muſt upon ſuch a ſuppoſition have had recourſe. To quote a paſſage, more to Mr. Godwin's purpoſe, than any to which he has referred, we are expreſſly told, that Jeſus in his own country *could not* perform any miracle, ἐκ ἠδύνατο ἐκεῖ οὐδεμιαν δύναμιν ποιῆσαι, "ſave that he laid his hands on a few ſick folk and healed them*." Now,

* Mark vi. 5. This paſſage was explained in the foregoing extracts from Mr. Graves.—It deſerves however, from it's importance, very full conſideration. And I am happy to refer to a writer, ſo capable of communicating inſtruction

Now, if the miracles of Jeſus had no other reality, than what the credulity of the ſpectators ſupplied, is it in the leaſt degree probable, that his friends, and upon this ſuppoſition, his accomplices, ſhould ſo unneceſſarily have laid open the ſource of the credit he obtained, and ſo explicitly revealed the artifices he employed? If this faith had been enjoined for a ſiniſter purpoſe, and particularly for one ſo eaſy to be detected

ſtruction as Abp. Newcome. See pp. 146—150. The words rendered he *could not*, are thus explained by Glaſs: Difficultèr, et cum tædio quaſi, miracula ibi fecit; pertæſus videl. infidelitatis Nazarethanorum, de quâ miratus v. 6, et conqueſtus fuiſſe v. 4, memoratur. Quædam autem miracula ibidem à Chriſto facta fuiſſe, eodem v. 5. dicitur. Philog. Sacra, p. 564. Glaſs has a canon, expreſſly upon this ſubject, which I ſhall make no apology for laying before my readers.

Verbum poteſtatis non rarò pro verbo debiti et juris accipitur; ita ut *poſſe*, idem ac licere, *non poſſe*, idem ac non licere, ſeu non debere, ſignificet. ibid.

In confirmation of this rule he refers to Gen. xxiv. 50. xxxiv. 14. xliii. 31. xliv. 22, 26. Deut. xvi. 5. 2 Sam. xvii. 17. Acts iv. 20. 1 Cor. iii. 11. x. 21. and Galat. iv. 15.

Addendum iis, quæ dicta ſunt, quòd Verbum poteſtatis quandoque pro verbo difficultatis ac moleſtiæ accipitur. Quod et ipſum in negativâ oratione (et eâ, quæ negativæ æquipollet) frequentius eſt. Alii ſic exprimunt: Non poſſe dicitur aliquando de re arduâ, et quæ non fiat citra moleſtiam et incommodum ſingulare. Ruth iv. 6. Eſth. viii. 6. Pſal. ci. 5. Luk. xi. 7. Joh. vi. 60. vii. 7. 1 Cor. iii. 1. Apoc. ii. 2. ib. Canon xii. Lib. iii. Tractat. 3.

Let me add a brief remark from Le Clerc, ad Gen. xxxvii. 4. *Non poſſumus* facere, quæ dudùm facere noluimus, et quæ adfectui, aut rationibus noſtris, contraria ſunt. This excellent critic refers to Grotius's note upon this verſe in St. Mark.

detected as the objection ſuppoſes, are the Sacred Hiſtorians the perſons, and the only perſons, through whom we were to be informed, that this docility of diſpoſition was the neceſſary condition to the performance of a miracle? Is it not contradictory to common ſenſe, to ſuppoſe that this was the caſe?—On the other hand, the open and unſuſpicious manner, in which the fact is conſtantly mentioned, ought to ſatisfy us that this injunction at leaſt had nothing to do with impoſture. I conceive then that the circumſtance is ſo far from diminiſhing, that it adds to, the credibility of the Goſpel hiſtory: and having before attempted to prove, that the enjoining this previous qualification is ſo far from being repugnant to the moral and benevolent views of the Deity in imparting to mankind a more perfect diſpenſation of religion, that on the contrary it was eſſential to the ſucceſs of thoſe views, I proceed to repel the third part of the charge, which relates to

CERTAIN moral defects in the character and temper of Jeſus.

"NEVER" (aſſerts Mr. Godwin) "were curſes poured out in a more copious ſtream, or with a more ardent and unſparing zeal, than

than by the meek and holy Jeſus, upon thoſe who oppoſed his pretenſions."

SURELY this is a moſt lamentable inſtance of the lengths, to which prejudice will carry a man, who profeſſes to love truth ſo ardently as Mr. Godwin does. He may perhaps be ſurpriſed to hear himſelf accuſed of prejudice: but if Voltaire has been pronounced "an intolerant bigot*" in conſequence of his zeal againſt Eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhments; and if Gibbon has been accuſed of "hating Chriſtianity ſo cordially that he might ſeem to revenge ſome perſonal injury†," this more modern objector muſt allow me to claſs him with theſe zealots of infidelity, and to charge him with evident marks of prejudice in his mode of attacking our religion. The animated rhetorical flouriſh, the pointed and acrimonious ſneer, and above all, the groſs, I do not ſay, the intended, violation of truth in this ſentence, fully juſtify me in this aſſertion.—In one word, I aſſert, that there is not a ſingle text in Scripture which will bear out any accuſer in the declaration, that, upon any occaſion, or in any circumſtance, Jeſus Chriſt ever uttered

* And this too by Gibbon! See Vol. VI. p. 442. not. Ed. 4to.

† See Porſon's Preface to Letters to Archdeacon Travis.

uttered a curſe *. I confeſs that I ſhould have ſearched my Teſtament again and again, without fixing upon any paſſage, from which I could imagine that ſuch a concluſion as Mr. Godwin's could be drawn. —This trouble however is ſpared me, as he has referred to a paſſage, which I conclude he thought the beſt adapted to his purpoſe. It ſtands thus in our Engliſh Verſion. "Ye ſerpents, ye generation of vipers! how can ye eſcape the damnation of hell?" This verſe, when properly underſtood, certainly contains a moſt ſevere and merited denunciation, but not a vindictive imprecation—

It

* The only paſſage, which ſeems at all to countenance ſuch an opinion, is Mark xi. 13—21. concerning which I muſt beg leave to quote Newcome's judicious remarks. "When our Lord blaſted the barren fig-tree, he pronounced the words, "Let no man eat fruit of thee for ever," with his uſual majeſty and ſedateneſs. His action was not the reſult of diſappointment, becauſe he hungred; but it aroſe from his fixt attention to convey important truths in the moſt lively manner. And when Peter obſerved on the morrow, that the fig-tree, which Jeſus had curſed, was withered away, he probably uſed a Hebrew-Syriac phraſe, ſignifying that the tree had been *deſtroyed* * by Jeſus's powerful word." p. 392. and before p. 311.

If Mr. Godwin chooſe to call this judicial and prophetic devotion of the barren fig-tree by the name of *curſing*, I have no objection; but I muſt, in that caſe, beg that he will allow the reality of the miracle; or at leaſt attend to the qualified meaning of the word. See Biel and Schleuſner in voce καταράομαι.

* "Had become יָרַשׁ. See Heb. vi. 8. Deut. xxviii. 18."

It announces that evil would befall thoſe who were thus addreſſed, and it implies that they deſerved puniſhment on account both of their craft and their cruelty, but certainly it is not expreſſive of a *wiſh* that ſuch evil ſhould befall them *.

LET us however inquire, what is the ground of the denunciation, which we read in this text? Is it the mere rejection of the Goſpel? Certainly not. And, be it obſerved, that in no other paſſage, where the mere act of diſbelieving is mentioned, without any reference to the motives of unbelief, or to the moral character of the unbelievers, do we find any veſtige of an irrevocable ſentence of condemnation in the language of our Lord. Is it even the general wickedneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees in their moral agency, as diſtinct from their conduct in religious matters? No. And yet ſurely ſuch wickedneſs might have reached

* Schleuſner thus explains, γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν: O progenies viperina! h. e. metaphoricè, O homines inſignis perverſitatis, in quos parentum vitioſitas propagata fuit. in v. γέννημα. Roſenmüller thus gives the ſenſe of the whole verſe, but certainly too looſely: Homines peſſimi, majorum peſſimorum poſteri, minimè effugietis pœnam graviſſimam. Grotius, more correctly: Tales cùm ſitis, quî fieri poteſt, ut graviſſimum, non hujus tantùm, ſed et alterius, ſæculi ſupplicium evitetis?

reached a degree of guilt, which would have juſtified any religious teacher in pronouncing them the objects of future condemnation. What then is the crime, which called forth ſuch marked and unuſual ſeverity from the mouth of Chriſt? It was the higheſt degree of moral depravity, upon a ſubject connected with religion. It was the accumulation of practical intolerance, upon ſpeculative bigotry. It was hypocriſy, combined with cruelty.

In ſome foregoing verſes, our Saviour had repreſented the Scribes and Phariſees, as cleanſing the outſide of the cup and platter, but as being full of extortion and exceſs within. Upon this circumſtance he mingles exhortation with reproof—"cleanſe that which is within the cup and platter." Afterwards he proceeds, from cenſuring their ſcrupulous obſervance of ceremonies, to reproach their fondneſs for the praiſe of men. He likens them unto whited ſepulchres, beautiful outwardly, but within full of dead men's bones: and adds, "even ſo ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocriſy and iniquity." Thus far the language of Chriſt evidently does point to the general miſconduct of the Scribes and Phariſees. But, accord-

according to the gradations of their guilt, we find gradations of ſeverity in the words of Chriſt. For in the laſt inſtance, which Mr. Godwin has attacked without regard to the context, and which I mean to vindicate by comparing it with the context, our Lord arraigns the bigotry and the intolerance of the Phariſees themſelves, breaking out into overt acts of murderous violence againſt himſelf and his followers, and ſtanding in direct oppoſition to thoſe moral principles, the validity of which they had themſelves admitted in the caſe of perſecuted Prophets. Their behaviour therefore involved inconſiſtency, hypocriſy, and barbarity. They built the tombs of the Prophets, they garniſhed the ſepulchres of the righteous, they ſaid "if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." But Chriſt foreknew, what their ſubſequent conduct indiſputably proved, that they would be partakers in the blood of himſelf and his diſciples: and therefore he ſaid, "Ye are witneſſes to yourſelves, that ye are the children * of them, which

* Videri vultis Prophetas colere, et damnare Patres veſtros Prophetarum occiſores, at interim parem in me et meos crudelitatem exercendo, vosmet non ſolùm naturâ, ſed et moribus

which killed the prophets." When they ſhould have filled up the meaſure of their fathers; when they ſhould have acted againſt other moral teachers upon the wicked motive, which they condemned in their fathers, who had ſlain the prophets; when they ſhould have not merely rejected the doctrines of Chriſt, and oppoſed his pretenſions, but have conſpired to the infliction of a cruel death upon the perſons, who believed thoſe doctrines and ſupported thoſe pretenſions; when their guilt ſhould have been thus aggravated by a variety of concurring circumſtances, our Lord juſtly and indignantly exclaims, "How can ye eſcape the damnation of Hell?" How can ye eſcape that final and extreme puniſhment, which in your own language is called the condemnation of Gehenna *?—I grant that future puniſhment was in theſe words denounced againſt the Scribes and Phariſees. —I deny that it was denounced againſt them, merely for oppoſing Chriſt's pretenſions.

bus, Propheticidarum filios eſſe demonſtratis. Gerhardi Harm. Evang. ap. Poli Synops. Genuini parentûm veſtrorum eſtis filii, ut naturâ, ita ingenio et indole. Elegantiſſimè hoc à Salvatore dicitur, aliquam habens æquivocationem. Nam et eorum ab illis parricidis originem nataleſque ducendos, et imitationem operum eorundem, ſimilitudinémque ingenii atque morum ſignificare poteſt. Roſenm.

* See Lowth's Iſaiah. Notes pp. 160. 282.

ſions.—I maintain that it was denounced againſt that ſavage intolerance, which prompted them to ſcourge and to crucify Jeſus and his followers.—And if the doctrines of Jeſus were true, if the miracles aſcribed to him were really performed, if his life was holy, and if the Apoſtles taught and acted, as they appear from Sacred hiſtory to act and to teach, is there any ſhock given to our feelings of moral proportion between the guilt imputed to the Phariſees, and the puniſhment denounced againſt them?—Upon the queſtion thus ſtated, I appeal to the juſtice, and even the candour, of every man who admits a moral government and a future life.

But on what account, may we aſk, are theſe ſarcaſtic invectives directed by Mr. Godwin againſt the conduct of Jeſus Chriſt? and whom is he endeavouring to ſhield from the fury of a malevolent aſſailant? No doubt he is eſpouſing the cauſe of ſome enlightened Philoſophers, whoſe generous attempts to enlarge the underſtanding, and increaſe the happineſs, of their countrymen, were oppoſed by the power of a tyrant, and defeated by the intolerance of a bigot! No doubt he is protecting from the attack of igno-

ignorance and errour ſome, whoſe doctrines breathed the pureſt benevolence, and who were indefatigable in their diſintereſted reſearches after truth! He is defending a virtuous few from the menaces and inſults of one, who ſubſtituted authority for evidence, and counteracted the efforts they made for the melioration and perfectibility of their ſpecies! The very reverſe of all this. Mr. Godwin heroically ſteps forth in defence of fanatical and cruel prieſts, of crafty and intereſted politicians, to protect them from the reproaches of a perſon, who inculcated the pureſt leſſons of morality, and practiſed the moſt exalted benevolence. He is vindicating prejudice, ſelfiſhneſs, and bigotry, againſt Him, who was devoted to the generous purpoſe of delivering the human race from theſe, and all other, moral evils. He is defending "hypocrites, who devoured widows' houſes, and for a pretence made long prayers;" who "paid tithe of mint and aniſe and cummin, BUT OMITTED THE WEIGHTIER MATTERS OF THE LAW, JUDGMENT, MERCY, AND TRUTH;" men, who perverted divine and human laws to the purpoſes of their own ſelfiſh and cruel policy. Theſe enemies to reform, theſe oppreſſors

preſſors of truth, theſe perſecutors of virtue, has a modern philoſopher valiantly, but inconſiſtently, undertaken to defend againſt the honeſt indignation of Him, "WHO WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD*;" "who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" who, even "when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himſelf to him, that judgeth righteouſly†."

SURELY, when we reflect upon the ſpirit and the tendency of Mr. Godwin's accuſations againſt Jeſus, as containing, indirectly but ſubſtantially, a plea for Scribes and Phariſees, we may retort upon the adverſaries of Chriſtianity the charge, which they have again and again levelled againſt Chriſtians. In the opinions of philoſophers, it ſhould ſeem, as well as prieſts, the end juſtifies the means; the convert to Deiſm is not more anxious to ſet bounds to his zeal, than the convert to Chriſtianity; and, by that zeal, infidelity, as Infidels themſelves have ſometimes ſaid of orthodoxy, is ſuppoſed by it's votaries to atone for the want of preciſion, impartiality, and candour.

PERHAPS however, we ſhall be told, theſe characters and theſe facts are delivered to us

* Acts x. 38. † 1 Pet. ii. 22, 23.

us through the medium of the Sacred Hiſtorians, and may therefore be queſtionable. The inference is not very legitimately drawn; and cannot be urged with conſiſtency by any one, who founds his objections upon the evidence which they ſupply. But to avoid cavil, I ſhall appeal to a witneſs, who is above all exception; I mean Joſephus, a bigoted Jew; who had ample opportunities of obſerving the conduct and diſpoſitions of his countrymen. "I will not ſuppreſs" (he exclaims) "what the ſtrength of my feeling dictates. I think if the Romans had delayed coming againſt theſe offenders, that the city would have been ſwallowed up by an earthquake, or overwhelmed by a deluge, or conſumed by fire from Heaven, like Sodom: for it produced a much more impious race than thoſe, who were thus deſtroyed." There is another very remarkable paſſage. "That period was very fruitful in wickedneſs among the Jews: ſo that they left no evil work unpractiſed; and, if a man choſe to exerciſe his imagination, he could not invent for them a new crime: to ſuch a degree were they diſeaſed privately and publickly, and ſo ambitiouſly did they contend to exceed

ceed each other in acts of impiety to God, and of injuſtice to their neighbour*."

IF a witneſs ſo diſintereſted, and ſo free from ſuſpicion, has borne teſtimony to the aggravated guilt of the "Scribes and Phariſees," we are not only furniſhed with ſatisfactory proof, that the reproaches were merited, and conſequently, that Jeſus was completely juſtified in uttering them, but we may preſs the reply ſtill further, and remark, that, as he expreſſed on this occaſion the feelings of a good man, ſo he exerciſed the authority, and diſplayed the preſcience, of a prophet. The paſſage in queſtion, we ſhould obſerve, is immediately followed by a prediction of the temporal calamities,

* Bell. Jud. Lib. V. c. xiii. ſect. 6. and Lib. VII. c. viii. ſect. 1. Theſe, and other paſſages to the ſame effect, are cited by Newcome, p. 267. I may add alſo the evidence of the Talmud itſelf, and other Jewiſh writings, as to the real character of the Phariſees. For this important teſtimony I am indebted to Schoettgen, who was moſt deeply read in theſe books, and who urges the fact as a proof, that the compilers of them were not acquainted with the writings of the New Teſtament. Tandem volumina Talmudica, et alia, eoſdem errores et vitia Phariſæorum enarrant, quæ à Chriſto ſervatore taxantur, et vivis coloribus depinguntur. Quod ſi verò talia ab ipſis in ſcriptis N. T. lecta fuiſſent, ſanè vix credibile eſt, ipſos eadem ſcriptis ſuis inſerturos, atque veritatem dictorum Servatoris teſtimonio firmiſſimo adſtructuros fuiſſe. Præfat. in Hor. Hebraic. et Talmud. &c. ſect. 15. Dreſd. et Lips. 1733.

calamities, which were deſtined to fall upon the hardened and impenitent Jews: and in that prediction, pointed as it is againſt thoſe, who oppoſed the pretenſions of Chriſt, we perceive the moſt unequivocal marks of tenderneſs and benevolence. Nor is the fact itſelf merely foretold, but all the circumſtances are enumerated, which were to attend that ſignal manifeſtation of the divine diſpleaſure; and even the time of their completion is explicitly declared. "Verily, I ſay unto you, all theſe things ſhall come upon this generation." If Mr. Godwin ſhall not object to examine the correſpondence between the prediction and the events foretold, I recommend to his earneſt attention what Lardner, and Newton, and Newcome*, have brought together upon the ſubject, with an accuracy of inveſtigation and a fulneſs of proof, which will aſſuredly baffle every attempt to diſcredit the divine authority of the Chriſtian diſpenſation. Into this ſtriking completion of prophecy it is not my object to enter;—any

* Lardner's Works, Vol. VII. p. 38, &c. Newton's Diſſertations on the Prophecies, xviii—xxi. and Newcome's Obſervations on our Lord's conduct, pp. 202—277. See alſo Kett's Hiſtory the Interpreter of Prophecy, Claſs 1, Chap. x.

any atttempt indeed of that nature would be ſuperfluous after the meritorious labours of the learned men above-mentioned. It is however ſtrictly within the province of this argument to remark, that a candid man, really deſirous of aſcertaining the moral feelings by which a ſpeaker was actuated, would have taken into his conſideration the whole diſcourſe, and not have confined himſelf merely to a part. The part, which has been ſelected, is indeed very far from warranting Mr. Godwin's inference: but if he had adverted to the words which immediately follow, he might have obſerved ſo much humanity and tenderneſs, ſuch a total abſence of an angry or malevolent ſpirit, as ought to have prevented him from ſtaining his book with the page which I have tranſcribed.—If Mr. G. produced one paſſage of our Lord, why does he omit another? If his nice and tender feelings were ſhocked with the threat of damnation againſt the Scribes and Phariſees, would they not have been gratified, when he read? "O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together,

even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate *."

LET me, in concluſion, warn this writer, who profeſſes himſelf the friend of truth, and the determined enemy of prejudice, to conduct his inquiries after the former with more candour, and to guard againſt the effects of the latter with more circumſpection. If, in thus purſuing his reſearches, he cannot bring himſelf to admit the credibility of the Goſpel hiſtory, let him at leaſt abſtain from invectives, ſo groſs and unfounded, againſt a character, which *almoſt all* it's enemies have confeſſed themſelves

* Matth. xxiii. 37, 38. See moreover that exquiſitely pathetic addreſs in Luke xix. 41, &c. and alſo xxiii. 27, &c. I confeſs, I think a man muſt have a ſluggiſh ſenſibility, who peruſes theſe words, and conſiders the circumſtances, under which they were uttered, without the ſtrongeſt emotions of awe, love, reverence, and admiration, for the character of the perſon, who delivered them.

The arguments, which I have endeavoured to employ againſt the animadverſions of Mr. Godwin upon this addreſs to the Scribes and Phariſees, will be found to receive great confirmation, and the character of our Lord to be completely vindicated, by the obſervations of Abp. Newcome reſpecting the time and the occaſion, when it was delivered. This excellent writer has conſidered the ſubject, with his uſual ability, in two diſtinct parts of his work, pp. 94—97. and 392—397. I will not weaken the force of his remarks by tranſcribing only a part; and, I am perſuaded, I ſhall conſult both the improvement, and the pleaſure, of my readers by recommending the whole to their careful peruſal.

themſelves bound to revere. If he cannot be perſuaded to acknowledge the ſublime and impreſſive virtues of Jeſus, let him learn at leaſt to regulate his conduct by thoſe maxims of prudence and decorum, which an heathen poet both inculcated and adopted toward heathen Divinities:

—ἀπό μοι λόγον
τῦτον, ϛόμα, ῥίψον·
ἐπεὶ ΤΟ ΓΕ ΛΟΙΔΟΡΗΣΑΙ
ΘΕΟΥΣ, ΕΧΘΡΑ ΣΟΦΙΑ· καὶ
τὸ καυχᾶσθαι παρὰ καιρὸν,
μανίαισιν ὑποκρέκει *.

* Pindar. Olymp. ix. Strophe 6.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VIII.

VIEW OF THE DEFECTS OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE MAHOMETAN RELIGION.

Connection of the propoſed inquiry with the deſign of this work.—Situation of the Roman and Perſian Empires.—Genius and temper of the Arabs.—Illuſtrious deſcent of the Impoſtor.—Protected by his uncle the Prince of Mecca.—Advantageous marriage.—Qualifications of mind and body.—Conceives the deſign of eſtabliſhing a new religion.—Slow progreſs of this deſign.—Danger.—Flight to Medina.—Aſſumption of temporal power.—Inducements to his followers.—Plunder.—Paradiſe.—Predeſtination.—Succeſs in his wars.—Fanaticiſm of his followers accounted for.—Objects of worſhip changed, but modes of worſhip retained.—Doctrine of one Supreme God not new in Arabia.—No change in moral habits.—Senſual pleaſures allowed.—Koran.—Extravagant claims in favour of it refuted.—Deficiency of internal and external evidence.—Death of the Impoſtor.—Appeal to infidels on behalf of our holy Religion.

AMONG other objects, propoſed by this work, I have endeavoured, wherever it has been practicable, to bring the ſubſtantial

ſubſtantial ſupport of facts to the aid of argument. In the execution of my deſign, I have been occaſionally led to conſider, in what way perſons, *actually* influenced by the motives which have been *imputed* to Jeſus and his Apoſtles by the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, have invariably conducted themſelves; and to ſhew, in what particulars of times and of circumſtances theſe perſons, whether fanatics or impoſtors, eſſentially differ from thoſe, with whom they are too often confounded. By an honeſt and undiſſembling appeal to hiſtory, I would oppoſe to the enemies of revealed truth their favourite teſt of experience.

In this deſign, it would doubtleſs appear a conſiderable omiſſion, if I neglected an inquiry into the cauſes, which produced the ſucceſs of the Arabian Impoſtor; ſince that ſucceſs has ſometimes been confounded, by the deſigning or the unthinking, with the ſucceſs which attended the propagation of the Goſpel.

I shall therefore advert, as briefly as I can, to ſome of the moſt diſcriminating circumſtances, under which the Prophet of Arabia was enabled to execute his portentous

tous deſigns; and theſe I ſhall collect from unqueſtionable ſources of information *.

THESE marked and diſtinct lines of ſeparation between the preaching of the Goſpel and the propagation of the Koran will immediately be diſcovered, if we conſider, 1ſt, The peculiar circumſtances of the times in which Mahomet appeared; 2ndly, the temper and genius of the people to whom he addreſſed himſelf; and, 3dly, his own natural and acquired advantages.

I. AT the cloſe of the ſixth, and in the commencement of the ſeventh, century, the powers which had ſo long ruled the Eaſtern world, the Empire of Conſtantinople and that of Perſia, were viſibly declining. The ſame

* As to the ſelection of materials for this chapter, which is chiefly hiſtorical, the moſt obſtinate unbeliever, I think, will not object to the ſources from which they are drawn. The writers here followed are Sale, who is allowed by Gibbon * to be "half a Muſſulman;" and Gibbon himſelf, who is not even half a Chriſtian. I had not an opportunity, until very lately, of procuring the works to which they generally refer, Abulfeda and Abulpharagius, and their learned interpreters, Pocock and Gagnier: nor indeed ſhould I think it neceſſary to verify every quotation, as I have no ſuſpicion of being miſled by my guides. I have conſulted Dr. Prideaux in his Life of Mahomet, and I have been inſtructed and delighted by the Bampton Lectures of Dr. White. But I am not aware that I have ſtated a ſingle fact, which is not admitted by one, or both, of the Authors firſt mentioned.

* Vol. V. p. 198. not. 65.

ſame cauſes ſeem to have contributed to the downfall, to which they were evidently verging. A long ſeries of conflicts with each other, inteſtine confuſion and diſorder, general relaxation of diſcipline, and a prevalent corruption of morals, had been gradually ſapping the foundation of the thrones, on which Juſtin and Choſroes were ſeated.

THE principles of weakneſs and diſunion, by which the vigour of the Roman and Perſian monarchies was abated, had the oppoſite effect of increaſing the population and reſources of Arabia: ſince this country, lying contiguous to thoſe once mighty Empires, afforded an aſylum to the numerous victims of civil and eccleſiaſtical tyranny. The exiles, whom the impolitic bigotry of the Greek Church, or the inſupportable deſpotiſm of the Perſian prince, drove from their own homes, ſought protection in a region, which from the earlieſt ages preſerved many rude, but indelible, features of independence.

WITH this ſtate of affairs in the neighbouring countries, the Arabians had the fulleſt opportunities of becoming acquainted, not only by means of the fugi-

tives to whom they performed offices of hoſpitality, but from the actual obſervation of ſuch of their countrymen as had ſerved in the armies of the contending Emperors. "The hiſtorians of the age of Juſtinian repreſent the ſtate of the independent Arabs, who were divided by intereſt or affection in the long quarrel of the eaſt. The tribe of Gaſſan was allowed to encamp on the Syrian territory: the princes of Hira were permitted to form a city about forty miles to the ſouthward of the ruins of Babylon. Their ſervice in the field was ſpeedy and vigorous; but their friendſhip was venal, their faith inconſtant, their enmity capricious. It was an eaſier taſk to excite, than to diſarm, theſe roving barbarians; and in the familiar intercourſe of war, they learned to ſee, and to deſpiſe, the ſplendid weakneſs both of Rome and of Perſia *."

II. If we conſider minutely the character and genius of the people to whom Mahomet firſt addreſſed himſelf, the ſucceſs of his ſingular attempt will appear to be only commenſurate with the means employed for that purpoſe. The moſt ſtriking features in the Arabian are his wild and ſavage

* Gibbon, Vol. V. p. 181. See alſo Sale, p. 37.

ſavage independence; his fondneſs for martial exploits; his high ſenſe of his own ſuperiority, and proud contempt* of the rights of others.

THIS ſpirit of independence had, it is true, prevailed among them ſo far as to make their own tribes the objects of mutual animoſity; but if their reſtleſſneſs and courage were ſo great as to engage them readily in conteſt with their own countrymen, they would ſurely prove very formidable adverſaries, whenſoever their collective ſtrength and impetuoſity ſhould be directed againſt a foreign enemy. So that they ſeem to have wanted nothing but a principle of union, in order to become diſtinguiſhed by the rapidity of their conqueſts.

THE complete independence of their civil life had the natural effect of producing equal liberty in the choice of their religious ſentiments: and the variety of ſtrangers, who had taken refuge in Arabia, ſupplied almoſt every modification of faith and worſhip. This variety is traced ſo ſucceſsfully by Mr. Gibbon, and it's conſequences upon the religious notions of the Arabs are ſo accurately repreſented, that, I truſt, the impor-

* Gibbon, pp. 183, 184.

importance of the ſubject will juſtify me in producing a paſſage of ſome length from his work, although he has not failed to take an opportunity of indulging in it his talent for ſarcaſtic inſinuation againſt the principles of revealed religion.

"ARABIA was free: the adjacent kingdoms were ſhaken by the ſtorms of conqueſt and tyranny, and the perſecuted ſects fled to the happy land, where they might profeſs what they thought, and practiſe what they profeſſed.

"THE religions of the Sabians and Magians, of the Jews and Chriſtians, were diſſeminated from the Perſian Gulf to the Red Sea. In a remote period of antiquity, Sabianiſm was diffuſed over Aſia by the ſcience of the Chaldeans, and the arms of the Aſſyrians. From the obſervations of two thouſand years, the prieſts and the aſtronomers of Babylon deduced the eternal laws of nature and providence. They adored the ſeven gods or angels who directed the ſeven planets, and ſhed their irreſiſtible influence upon the earth. The attributes of the ſeven planets, with the twelve ſigns of the Zodiac, and the twenty four conſtellations of the northern and ſouthern

ſouthern hemiſphere, were repreſented by images and taliſmans; the ſeven days of the week were dedicated to their reſpective deities; the Sabians prayed thrice each day; and the temple of the moon at Haran was the term of their pilgrimage. But the flexible genius of their faith was always ready either to teach or to learn; in the tradition of the creation, the deluge, and the patriarchs, they held a ſingular agreement with their Jewiſh captives; they appealed to the ſecret books of Adam, Seth, and Enoch; and a ſlight infuſion of the Goſpel has transformed the laſt remnant of the Polytheiſts into the Chriſtians of St. John, in the territory of Baſſora. The altars of Babylon were overturned by the Magians; but the injuries of the Sabians were revenged by the ſword of Alexander; Perſia groaned five hundred years under a foreign yoke; and the pureſt diſciples of Zoroaſter eſcaped from the contagion of idolatry, and breathed with their adverſaries the freedom of the deſert. Seven hundred years before the death of Mahomet, the Jews were ſettled in Arabia: and a far greater multitude was expelled from the Holy Land in the wars of Titus and Hadrian. The induſ-

trious

trious exiles aſpired to liberty and power: they erected ſynagogues in the cities, and caſtles in the wilderneſs; and their Gentile converts were confounded with the children of Iſrael, whom they reſembled in the outward mark of circumciſion. The Chriſtian miſſionaries were ſtill more active and ſucceſsful: the Catholics aſſerted their univerſal reign: the ſects, whom they oppreſſed, ſucceſſively retired beyond the limits of the Roman Empire: the Marcionites and Manichæans diſperſed their *phantaſtic* opinions and apocryphal goſpels: the churches of Yemen, and the princes of Hira and Gaſſan, were inſtructed in a purer creed by the Jacobite and Neſtorian biſhops. The liberty of choice was preſented to the tribes: each Arab was free to elect or to compoſe his private religion: and the rude ſuperſtition of his houſe was mingled with the ſublime theology of ſaints and philoſophers. A fundamental article of faith was inculcated by the conſent of the learned ſtrangers; the exiſtence of one ſupreme God, who is exalted above the powers of heaven and earth, but who has often revealed himſelf to mankind by the miniſtry of his angels and prophets; and whoſe grace or juſtice has interrupted,

rupted, by ſeaſonable miracles, the order of nature. The moſt rational of the Arabs acknowledged his power, though they neglected his worſhip; and it was habit, rather than conviction, that ſtill attached them to the relics of idolatry. The Jews and Chriſtians were people of the *book*; the Bible was already tranſlated into the Arabic language, and the volume of the Old Teſtament was accepted by the concord of theſe implacable enemies. In the ſtories of the Hebrew patriarchs, the Arabs were pleaſed to diſcover the fathers of their nation. They applauded the birth and promiſes of Iſmael; revered the faith and virtue of Abraham; traced his pedigree and their own to the creation of the firſt man, and imbibed with equal credulity the prodigies of the holy text, and the dreams and traditions of the Jewiſh rabbies*."

THERE is another point in the character of this ſingular people well worth our attention; which is, their extravagant fondneſs for eloquence and poetry. One of the accompliſhments upon which the Arabians chiefly valued themſelves was eloquence, and

* Gibbon, p. 194. See alſo White's Bampton Lecture, pp. 74, &c.

and a perfect ſkill in their own tongue. "In this," obſerves Sale, "they exerciſed themſelves, by compoſing of orations and poems. Their orations were of two ſorts, metrical or proſaic; the one being compared to pearls ſtrung, the other to looſe ones. They endeavoured to excel in both, and whoever was able, in an aſſembly, to perſuade the people to a great enterprize, or diſſuade them from a dangerous one, or gave them other wholeſome advice, was honoured with the title of Khâteb, or orator, which is now given to the Mohammedan preachers."

"THEY purſued a method very different from that of the Greek and Roman orators; their ſentences being like looſe gems, without connection, ſo that this ſort of compoſition ſtruck the audience chiefly by the fulneſs of the periods, the elegance of the expreſſion, and the acuteneſs of the proverbial ſayings; and ſo perſuaded were they of their excelling in this way, that they would not allow any nation to underſtand the art of ſpeaking in public, except themſelves and the Perſians; which laſt were reckoned much inferiour in that reſpect to the Arabians."

"POETRY

"POETRY was in ſo great eſteem among them, that it was a great accompliſhment, and a proof of ingenuous extraction, to be able to expreſs one's ſelf in verſe with eaſe and elegance, on any extraordinary occurrence; and even in their common diſcourſe, they made frequent applications of celebrated paſſages of their famous poets. In their poems were preſerved the diſtinction of deſcents, the rights of tribes, the memory of great actions, and the propriety of their language; for which reaſons an excellent poet reflected an honour on his tribe, ſo that as ſoon as any one began to be admired for his performances of this kind in a tribe, the other tribes ſent publickly to congratulate them on the occaſion, and themſelves made entertainments, at which the women aſſiſted, dreſt in their nuptial ornaments, ſinging to the ſound of timbrels the happineſs of their tribe, who had now one to protect their honour, to preſerve their genealogies and the purity of their language, and to tranſmit their actions to poſterity; for this was all performed by their poems, to which they were ſolely obliged for their knowledge and inſtructions, moral and œconomical, and to which they had

recourſe as to an oracle, in all doubts and differences.

"No wonder then that a public congratulation was made on this account, which honour they were yet ſo far from making cheap, that they never did it but on one of theſe three occaſions, which were reckoned great points of felicity: viz. on the birth of a boy, the riſe of a poet, and the fall of a foal of generous breed. To keep up an emulation among their poets, the tribes had once a year a general aſſembly at Ocadh; a place famous on this account, and where they kept a weekly mart or fair, which was held on our Sunday. This annual meeting laſted a whole month, during which time they employed themſelves not only in trading, but in repeating their poetical compoſitions, contending and vying with each other for the prize; whence the place, it is ſaid, took it's name. The poems that were judged to excel, were laid up in their king's treaſuries; as were the ſeven celebrated poems, thence called Al Moallakât, rather than from their being hung up in the Caaba; which honour they alſo had by public order, being written on Egyptian ſilk, and in letters of gold, for which reaſon

they

they had alſo the name of Al Modhahabât, or the golden verſes *."

III. At the period of which we are ſpeaking, the ſpirit and renown of the Koreiſhites, were moſt conſpicuous among the Arabian tribes †. They not only poſſeſſed the ſupreme power at Mecca; but, what was of infinitely more importance, the CAABA ‡, or ſacred temple, was committed to their care. Of this tribe the moſt illuſtrious was the family of the Haſhemites, in whom the ſovereignty was actually veſted. To this family Mahomet owed his birth. His grandfather Abdol Motalleb, the ſon of Haſhem ‖, (both of whom were princes deſervedly popular for their learning and munificence) was ſeated on the throne of Mecca, when he was born; and as if every circumſtance conſpired to render the origin of the future Prophet both fortunate and illuſtrious, and to mark him out as an object of reverence to his countrymen, he was the only child of Abdallah,

* Sale, p. 27. See Gibbon, p. 183. and not.
† Gibbon, p. 178. ‡ Gibbon, p. 190.
‖ Gibbon, pp. 191, 197.

dallah, the favourite ſon of this venerable chieftain.

MAHOMET, it is true, was early left an orphan, and his patrimony became, in conſequence, very inconſiderable. But he found a powerful protector in the virtuous and reſpectable Abu Taleb, who ſucceeded to the ſovereignty; and who, in ſpite of the arts and impoſture of his nephew, could never be prevailed upon to abandon him *. But, narrow as were the circumſtances of his fortune during early life, he fully repaired the loſs he had ſuſtained, long before the period in which he thought fit to aſſume the character of a prophet. In the twenty-fifth † year of his age, he was married to Chadijah, a rich widow of Mecca, and thus, even in the acknowledgment of Mr. Gibbon, "was reſtored to the ſtation of his anceſtors ‡."

IF Mahomet was ſo remarkably favoured by fortune in the circumſtances of his birth and connections, he was equally gifted by nature in the qualifications of mind and body. His graceful perſon, his majeſtic appear-

* Sale, p. 44. Gibbon, p. 222.

† Twenty-eighth, ſays Prideaux. But ſee White, p. 173, and not.

‡ P. 199.

appearance, his inſinuating manners, his captivating addreſs, and, above all, his talents for poetical compoſition and perſuaſive eloquence, are the conſtant theme of the eulogiums of his countrymen. He was patient in labour, he was intrepid in danger, and ſplendid in munificence. He was therefore a character peculiarly formed to attract the admiration, and to effect the converſion, of a people, who were prepoſſeſſed even to enthuſiaſm in favour of any of theſe qualities; and who could not fail to be charmed irreſiſtibly, when they ſaw them all united in this illuſtrious Koreiſhite *.

Thus ſingularly qualified does Mahomet appear to engage the aſſiſtance of his countrymen in *any* deſign, which his extenſive talents and aſpiring temper might prompt him to undertake. Nor was he diſpoſed to forego the opportunity of employing theſe materials among a people, upon whom they were ſo likely to be uſed with effect. His ambition, or his enthuſiaſm †, ſuggeſted to him the idea of effecting a change in the pre-

* See his character, as drawn by Sale, p. 41. by White, p. 171. and by Gibbon, p. 199. See alſo the ſhort, but impreſſive, character given of Hatem by the ſame hiſtorian, as the perfect model of Arabian virtue. "He was brave and liberal; an eloquent poet, and a ſucceſsful robber." p. 189.

† For the probable motives of his conduct, ſee Sale, p. 39.

prevailing religion, or rather of uniting all the various forms of religion into one compact and uniform ſyſtem*. With a view to this deſign, he indulged, or affected, a turn for religious meditation. Every year, during the feaſt of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world; and in the cave of Mount Hera †, near Mecca, projected, or at leaſt contemplated and prepared, his ſtupendous plan, till it was ripe for execution.

He had reached the fortieth year of his age before he ventured to entruſt to another the ſecret, with which his boſom laboured. He proceeded with the utmoſt circumſpection, and revealed his intentions to thoſe firſt, over whom he had moſt influence. His wife, his ſervant, and his friend were his firſt converts, and ſurely not the moſt difficult to be gained ‡. Chadijah, paſſionately fond of an affectionate || and ſpirited huſband; Zeid Ebn Haretha, who was immediately preſented with his freedom; and Ali, an impetuous ſtripling in the eleventh year of his age, could not be ſuppoſed to withſtand

* See White, pp. 77. and 177.
† Gibbon, p. 202. White, pp. 174, 182.
‡ See Gibbon, p. 219.
|| See Gibbon, p. 255. for a proof of Mahomet's attachment to his firſt wife.

ſtand his aſſertions very ſteadily, or to weigh his pretenſions with much diſcrimination. To theſe ſucceeded Abubeker, a man of great perſonal weight among the Arabs; by whoſe influence chiefly, ſix * other perſons of diſtinction in Mecca profeſſed that "faith, which; under the name of Iſlam, Mahomet preached to his family and to the nation;" and which is well deſcribed, as compounded of an "eternal truth, and of a neceſſary fiction: That there is only one God, and that Mahomet is the Apoſtle of God †."

THREE years were thus ſpent in the converſion of about fourteen proſelytes. In the following year he openly aſſumed the prophetic office. That his own family might have the full benefit of the gracious tidings of which he was the meſſenger, he took meaſures to aſſemble them: but, by his own family, his own ſtory was heard with diſguſt or with ridicule. He proceeded however to preach to the people of Mecca, and to the pilgrims who reſorted thither: but by theſe means he ſo excited the indignation of the Koreiſhites, that he would undoubtedly have

* See their names in Sale, p. 43. Gibbon ſays ten, but the others were not men of ſuch note as theſe.

† Gibbon, p. 202.

have fallen a victim to their fury, if he had not been protected by Abu Taleb, who ſtill ſhielded the friend while he deſpiſed the impoſtor.

In the courſe of five years, his party conſiſted of upwards of an hundred, the majority of whom were compelled to quit Mecca in conſequence of the odium, which the new doctrines and new pretenſions of Mahomet excited. This increaſed ſo much, that upon the death of his venerable uncle and guardian, the prophet was himſelf compelled to retire from his native city; nor did he venture to return, without firſt aſſuring himſelf of the protection of Al Motaam Ebn Adi*.

In the chief ſeat of idolatrous worſhip, eſpecially while a zealous votary of that worſhip was in poſſeſſion of the ſupreme power, it was likely that the great ſtand would be made againſt the ſchemes of the impoſtor; and that he would in conſequence be expoſed to conſiderable danger. In fact, his death was reſolved upon ſoon after Abu Sophian ſucceeded to the principality of the republic of Mecca†. Mahomet employed the reſources of his cunning to

* Sale, p. 46. † Gibbon, p. 224.

to avoid the blow which already menaced his deſtruction; and with great difficulty ſucceeded in making his eſcape to Medina, where a concurrence of favourable circumſtances had diſpoſed the majority of the inhabitants to ſupport his pretenſions.

In this city he no longer diſguiſed his intention of aſſuming temporal power; nor did he fail to give a looſe to the paſſions of his followers, by making his own pretended authority the inſtrument of his unbounded ambition. The infidels were no longer to be aſſailed by the gentle arts of inſinuation and of eloquence; the impotent weapons of debate and of perſuaſion were henceforth to be laid aſide; Iſlamiſm was to be propagated by the ſword; it's enemies were to be ſwept from the face of the earth, and their property to become the lawful acquiſition of thoſe, who claimed it by the double merit of faith and of valour.

To thoſe, who ſurvived the conflict, ſuitable advantages were held out from the property and perſonal ſervice of the vanquiſhed; while they, who were deſtined to fall, were aſſured of immediate admiſſion into the joys of Paradiſe *.

The

* White, pp. 83. 87.

THE more effectually to diſpel all uncomfortable reflections from the minds of his followers, and to conſole thoſe who were ſtrongly attached to the luxuries and pleaſures of this life, the doctrine of predeſtination* was inculcated in the moſt unequivocal and authoritative terms. Equal peril was attached to the indolence of the voluptuous, and to the activity of the brave; to the coward who declined the battle, and to the warrior who advanced in it's front. The preciſe term of life was appointed to all, which no artifice could elude, and no deſpair anticipate.—Such were the maxims, and ſuch the hopes, which elured to the ſtandard of the Arabian prophet hundreds of his reſtleſs countrymen. And with theſe additional motives to valour, can we wonder that they were ſucceſsful in their firſt predatory excurſions; that this ſucceſs ſhould be converted into a ſpecious and cogent argument for the truth of his extraordinary pretenſions; and that, a violent ſpirit of fanaticiſm being once excited, this conſummate politician ſhould in time make himſelf maſter of Arabia, and live to ſee his religion embraced by theſe brave, but illiterate

* Prideaux, p. 81.

rate Barbarians? In fact, after he was in poſſeſſion of Medina as a rallying point, and after he had erected a ſtandard, to which all, who were fond of change, who thirſted for glory, or longed for plunder, could reſort; the ſucceſs of ſuch captivating doctrines, enforced by ſuch powerful auxiliaries, ceaſes to excite aſtoniſhment. After this period, he ſo much reſembles every other conqueror, that it is needleſs to inveſtigate minutely the cauſes of his rapid progreſs. When ſome of the roving and martial tribes were once united under a leader of acknowledged talents, and were impelled by the moſt enthuſiaſtic attachment to his perſon and cauſe, it is no wonder that they made ſucceſsful war againſt the diſunited tribes, however courageous, who ſeem to have had no leader of talent or activity to oppoſe to the Impoſtor. When theſe were in their turns reduced to the alternative of death or Iſlamiſm, and found the new faith ſo profitable and ſo indulgent to their temporal gratifications, we ſurely cannot be ſurpriſed, if, together with their conquerors, they oppreſſed without difficulty the feeble and exhauſted Empires, whoſe glory and whoſe ſtrength had equally paſſed away. It

is only neceſſary to account for the origin of that fanaticiſm, with which theſe war-like tribes were at length inſpired: when the principle had once taken root, the ſucceſs, which attended thoſe whom it ſtimulated to enterpriſe, is by no means unaccountable.—Mahomet, as a mere conqueror, reſembles thoſe, who, without the aid of religion, have at times over-run large portions of the world. Like them, he was ſometimes defeated; like them, wounded in battle *; like them, he employed ſtratagems † to gain victories; and, like them, he ſullied the luſtre of his victories by cold and remorſeleſs cruelty ‡. "Does it ſeem incredible," exclaims the hiſtorian, "that a private citizen ſhould graſp the ſword and the ſceptre, ſubdue his native country, and erect a monarchy by his victorious arms? In the moving pictures of the dynaſties of the Eaſt, an hundred fortunate uſurpers have ariſen from a baſer origin, ſurmounted more formidable obſtacles, and filled a larger ſcope of empire and conqueſt. Mahomet was alike inſtructed to preach and to fight, and

* Gibbon, p. 234.
† Prideaux, p. 85. Gibbon, p. 239.
‡ Gibbon, pp. 235, 236. White, p. 190.

and the union of theſe oppoſite qualities, while it enhanced his merit, contributed to his ſucceſs: the operation of force and perſuaſion, of enthuſiaſm and fear, continually acted on each other, till every barrier yielded to their irreſiſtible power*."

THE only point then about which there can be a moment's heſitation, is the origin of that fanaticiſm, which this extraordinary man undoubtedly occaſioned. And this heſitation will immediately ceaſe, if we recollect the prediſpoſing circumſtances in his favour, as they have been already ſtated, and alſo take into account the nature and extent of the change, which he really effected in the minds of his countrymen.

IT is unqueſtionably a matter of great difficulty, to produce any conſiderable alteration in the religious ſentiments and practices of any part of mankind. If I were to queſtion this principle, much of the reaſoning, which has been employed in the foregoing parts of this work, would fall to the ground. But it is a ſubject of great moment, to conſider from what cauſe the difficulty ariſes.—Does it ariſe ſimply from a change in the direction of the abſtract principle of faith? Becauſe we transfer the veneration,

* Gibbon, p. 272.

veneration, uſually paid to an inviſible Being called by one name, to an inviſible Being called by another? Does it ariſe even hence, that we are to concentrate into one object, that attachment and that devotion which had before been divided among ſeveral? Does it ariſe wholly, or even principally, from a change of ſentiment?—There is ſomething, no doubt, in all this.—But I conceive that the repugnance, which the mind ſhews to diveſt itſelf of religious opinions, proceeds chiefly from that accumulation of habits, with which particular religious notions have been connected. It ariſes from the ſeries of actions with which the theory of religion has been imperceptibly, but invariably, aſſociated. And hence it ſhould ſeem, if the mind be ſtill permitted to hold the ſame aſſociations of time and place, of pomp and ceremony, of feſtival and ſolemnity, that the particular objects of theſe modes of worſhip will ceaſe to be of the ſame importance; and that, if the ſame ablutions be performed, and the ſame victims ſacrificed in the ſame temple, the Idolater will be diſpoſed to part with the viſible repreſentation before him for the idea of an inviſible Being, whoſe

whoſe reſidence he is taught to conſider as in Heaven.

Upon this principle we may account for the mutual indulgence, with which idolaters have in general regarded the rites and ceremonies of each other; and the indifference, with which they have permitted the intermixture of foreign rites, while their own were retained. Upon the ſame principle we account for the intolerance with which they treated the Chriſtians, whoſe creed would not allow the ſame aſſociations of religious habits and ſentiments in their proſelytes. Upon the ſame principle we account for the reluctance ſhewn by the Jews to admit the change in their religious ceremonies, which Chriſtianity authorized; and, preciſely upon the ſame grounds, the ſucceſs of Mahomet in ſpreading his religious theories in Arabia is completely explained.

We have ſeen that the belief of one ſupreme God* was generally entertained in Arabia. At the ſame time it is certain, that religious rites were performed in honour of various ſubordinate Deities, with whoſe images

* Prideaux, p. 95. Gibbon, p. 196. White, p. 177, and note. Sale, p. 15.

veneratic
called I
called '
that '
that
had
De
fr
ſc
(

Caaba was crowded. The opMahomet encountered, was violent, and exactly what been expected from the perof idolatry. It was ſo violent, that must inevitably have ſunk before it, had been for the ſtrenuous and unremitſupport of the prince of Mecca. Nor he by any means have overcome the poſition, but by retaining ſo much of the idolatrous rites and cuſtoms, as to render his religion almoſt the ſame in every reſpect with that to which they were before devoted, except that the abſtract notion of one God was ſubſtituted for the creed of Polytheiſm, and that the images of the falſe Deities were removed from the places of worſhip. The pilgrimages to the Caaba*, and the ceremonies performed there, were not only allowed, but enjoined; the *black ſtone* was to be held in preciſely the ſame veneration; ablutions were pronounced equally neceſſary and meritorious as in the *time of ignorance* †; the important duty of faſting was held in the ſame eſtimation; and a tacit

* In the circumſtance of place therefore Mahomet ſhewed his regard to reſemblance, which Mr. Hume properly ſtates as one great ſource of the aſſociation of our ideas.

† Sale, ſect. 1.

tacit permiſſion was given to practiſe, as before, the national rite of circumciſion *.

Even in their devotions, though the immediate object was changed, yet the Kebla † ſtill pointed to the quarter conſecrated by antient ſuperſtition. And it deſerves to be particularly noticed, that the pretended Apoſtle did not dare to offer violence to the idols of the Caaba, till he had entered Mecca at the head of a powerful army, blindly attached to their leader, by the ſucceſs which he had taught them to conſider as an irreſiſtible proof of his divine commiſſion, and by the gratification which that ſucceſs ſupplied to the cravings of their favourite appetites.

It is moreover to be remarked, that the doctrine taught by Mahomet, did not neceſſarily cauſe any conſiderable change in the moral habits of his proſelytes. The uſe of wine was indeed forbidden to his followers; but the inhabitants of a warm climate are generally abſtemious, and the Arabs were not particularly addicted to the uſe of fermented

* Vid. Gibbon, pp. 192, 193. and not. Alſo 213, 215. Sale, pp. 118 and 122. See another inſtance of his accommodation in Sale, p. 20.

† Prideaux, p. 73.

mented liquors *. But then he ſupplied them with a large indulgence in the luxuries more captivating to Eaſtern minds; in women, in baths, and in perfumes. Not only were they taught to look upon theſe, as allowed pleaſures in the preſent world; but the moſt enchanting pictures of ſtill ampler enjoyments in Paradiſe, the ſame in kind though heightened in degree, were preſented to their eager imaginations. Indeed, it would not be poſſible to fix upon a mode of life, or upon a ſpecies of future felicity, ſo thoroughly adapted to the indolence or the

* See Gibb. p. 252. Mahomet ſeems to have found little or no difficulty in perſuading his followers to abſtain from wine. They probably found ſubſtitutes, which were better adapted to the climate, and not prohibited by the Koran, in refreſhing draughts of Sherbet, or exhilarating doſes of opium. Such, at leaſt, are the reſources of ſome among his diſciples at the preſent day. "And how much the Eaſtern people deal in artificial liquors of prodigious ſtrength, the uſe of wine being forbidden, may be ſeen in a curious chapter of Kempfer upon that ſubject. Amæn. Exot. Faſc. III. Obs. 15." Lowth's notes on Iſaiah, p. 13.

When however the Mahometan religion extended beyond the views of it's founder, and his followers became fixed in a different climate, the prohibition againſt wine appeared harſh, and was conſequently diſobeyed. A ſingular fact of this kind is noticed by Andrews, in his Hiſtory of Great Britain, connected with the Chronology of Europe. "In 1546, Solimon the Second ſends an army into Hungary ſufficient to preſerve his conqueſts, but remains in perſon at his Metropolis, in order to regulate the manners of his people. He is particularly ſevere againſt the drinkers of wine, and carries his ſtrictneſs ſo far, as to order the vines to be rooted up." Vol. I. part II. pag. 297.

the voluptuouſneſs of the inhabitants of Arabia, as thoſe to which Mahomet invited his faithful Muſulmen.

HOLDING out, as the Impoſtor thus did, the moſt unbounded enjoyment of the pleaſures of this world, as well as of that which is to come *, ſurely it cannot excite ſurpriſe that the religion of the Koran triumphed. Had it enjoined more changes of ſentiment and of habit †, had it exacted from

* Sale, p. 44. Gibbon, p. 220.

† "Indifference for rites and opinions ſtill marks the character of the Bedoweens, and they might accept, as looſely as they hold, the doctrine of the Koran." Gibbon, p. 240.

In Dr. Campbell's excellent Diſſertation upon Miracles, an obſervation is made, which ſeems at variance with ſome poſitions in this chapter. "It may indeed be affirmed with truth," he ſays, "that the religion of the wild Arabs was more repugnant to the doctrine of Mahomet, than the religious dogmas of the Jews were to thoſe of Jeſus." (p. 116. 3d Edit.). He proceeds to obviate the effects of this conceſſion by ſome maſterly remarks, and by adducing a paſſage from Monteſquieu to this purpoſe; "That though men have a very ſtrong tendency to idolatry, they are nevertheleſs but little attached to idolatrous religions; that though they have no great tendency to ſpiritual ideas, they are nevertheleſs ſtrongly attached to religions which enjoin the adoration of a ſpiritual being." De l'Eſprit des Loix, liv. 25. chap. 2. I truſt, however, that the importance of the ſubject will juſtify me in remarking, that the aſſertion of Dr. Campbell is true ſo far only, as it regards the *ſpirit* and *intention* of the religions which he has made the objects of compariſon. But certainly it is inaccurate, if we conſider the point of view in which the religions appeared to thoſe, who, at the time of their promulgation, reſpectively embraced or oppoſed them. And this is the only light in which the fact ſhould be regarded, when

from it's votaries a greater ſacrifice of their favourite propenſities, than it really did, the ſyſtem muſt have found eager and impetuous advocates; and circumſtanced as the neighbouring countries then were, oppoſition to an hardy nation, impelled by fanaticiſm, muſt have been vain.

To account however for the ſucceſs of Mahomet from cauſes merely human, to ſhew that prediſpoſing circumſtances rendered his

we apply the conſideration of the ſucceſs theſe religions met with, as one criterion of their truth, or falſhood. Thoſe, who were converted by the Arabian prophet, were by no means united in religious ſentiment; nor were they zealous in what they profeſſed; nor did the generality of them diſallow the main article of faith, which Mahomet wiſhed to eſtabliſh, the unity of the Supreme Being. Beſides this, as we have ſeen, their religious aſſociations and habits were left free and unmoleſted. The Jews, on the contrary, were not only firmly united in the belief of one ſyſtem of opinions, but attached in an extraordinary degree to that ſyſtem, which they deemed incompatible with the pretenſions of Jeſus: moreover, the rites and ceremonies, to which cuſtom and an inveterate errour concerning their real value and import had ſo ſtrongly attached their minds, were pronounced inefficacious and no longer neceſſary to be obſerved. Among the Jews alſo, the immutability of their religion was a popular principle; but there is no trace of ſuch a principle in the nations converted by Mahomet.—Hence then, *practically* ſpeaking, the religion offered by Mahomet to the Arabians was much more in uniſon with their feelings and opinions, and, in courſe, much more likely to be embraced by them, than the doctrines of Chriſtianity were, when offered to the acceptance of the Jews, who regarded the letter and not the ſpirit of the Law, and who had ſuffered every pure and correct notion of religion to be ſuperſeded by a blind and ſervile adherence to vain ceremonies and abſurd traditions.

his attempt eaſy, and his ſucceſs probable, is only one among a variety of arguments, which eſtabliſh beyond contradiction the true nature of the deſign, which he ſo boldly undertook to accompliſh. It might appear ſuperfluous to detail many of theſe proofs, but I am unwilling wholly to omit the poſitive teſtimony which the Koran itſelf furniſhes againſt the pretenſions of it's author.

THE claims which he made on behalf of this myſterious volume, are extravagant in the higheſt degree. He confeſſed himſelf unable to perform any miracle, but he boldly appealed to this ſacred book, as a miracle which ſupplied the moſt ſatisfactory evidence in his favour.—That a book, ſo ſurpaſſing all human compoſitions, ſo far exceeding every other book both in diction and in matter, ſhould be compoſed by a man illiterate and ignorant* like himſelf, he boldly pronounced to be plainly impoſſible: and he as boldly pronounced, that it was written by the finger of the Almighty before the creation of the World. "The Mohammedans" ſays Sale, "abſolutely deny the Korân

* See Gibbon, p. 200. note. Dr. White's reaſoning upon the ſubject is highly ingenious, if not altogether concluſive. Pag. 203, 204. and notes xxxvi—xxxviii.

Korân was compoſed by their prophet himſelf, or any other for him; it being their general and orthodox belief that it is of divine original, nay, that it is eternal and uncreated, remaining, as ſome expreſs it, in the very eſſence of God; that the tranſcript has been from everlaſting by God's throne, written on a table of vaſt bigneſs, called the preſerved table, in which are alſo recorded the divine decrees, paſt and future: that a copy from this table, in one volume, on paper, was by the miniſtry of the angel Gabriel ſent down to the loweſt Heaven, in the month of Ramadân, in the night of power: from whence Gabriel revealed it to Mohammed by parcels, ſome at Mecca, ſome at Medina, at different times, during the ſpace of twenty-three years, as the exigency of affairs required: giving him however the conſolation to ſhew him the whole (which they tell us was bound in ſilk, and adorned with gold and precious ſtones of Paradiſe) once a year; but in the laſt year of his life, he had the favour to ſee it twice. They ſay, that few chapters were delivered entire, the moſt part being revealed piecemeal, and written down, from time to time, by the Prophet's amanuenſes in ſuch or ſuch

a part

a part of ſuch or ſuch a chapter, till they were compleated, according to the directions of the angel *."

Such an aſſumption at once carries with it it's own refutation. If however we conſider the inferiority of the Koran to many profeſſed human † compoſitions, and ſtill more the palpable contradictions which it contains, we may allow the Impoſtor himſelf to have been it's author, without much indulgence to his claims as the Apoſtle of God.—Reſpecting the contradictory paſſages, it is curious to obſerve the manner, in which the Mahometan doctors have accounted for them. "They obviate any objection from thence by the doctrine of abrogation; for they ſay that God in the Korân commanded ſeveral things, which were for good reaſons afterwards revoked and abrogated ‡."

It is plain alſo, that many paſſages in the Koran were produced, in order to extricate it's author from ſome embarraſſment, in which he had been entangled. "For whenever any thing happened which perplexed and gravelled Mohammed, and which he

* Sale, p. 64.
† Gibbon, p. 209. White, p. 255, &c.
‡ Sale, p. 67. See Gibbon, 208. and Prideaux, 118.

he could not otherwiſe get over, he had conſtant recourſe to a new revelation, as an infallible expedient in all nice caſes, and he found the ſucceſs of this method anſwer his expectation. It was certainly an admirable and politic contrivance of his to bring down the whole Korân to the loweſt Heaven only, and not to the earth, as a bungling prophet would probably have done; for if the whole had been publiſhed at once, innumerable objections might have been made, which it would have been very hard, if not impoſſible, for him to ſolve. But as he pretended to receive it by parcels, as God ſaw proper that they ſhould be publiſhed for the converſion and inſtruction of the people, he had a ſure way to anſwer all emergencies, and to extricate himſelf with honour from any difficulty which might occur. If any objection be hence made to that eternity of the Korân which the Mohammedans are taught to believe, they eaſily anſwer it by their doctrine of abſolute predeſtination; according to which, all the accidents, for the ſake of which theſe occaſional paſſages were revealed, were predetermined by God from all eternity *."

THE paſſages, here alluded to, are not only

* Sale, p. 63.

only abſolutely deſtructive of the claims ſet up by Mahomet in favour of the Koran, becauſe they are each ſo evidently fabricated for a particular and preſſing emergency, but becauſe the occaſions themſelves, on which he borrowed the aid of theſe pretended revelations, are ſo utterly unworthy of the Deity, and even any meſſenger, bearing a commiſſion from him. Thus the unlimited number of wives with which the Prophet was indulged *; the ſanction that was given to his perjury and luſt in his amours with Zeineb and with Mary; the variety of laws relative to the appropriation of ſpoils, as well as the licenſe to deſtroy his captives in cold blood †, are inſurmountable

* Sale, p. 137. Gibbon, 252.

† See Gibbon, p. 254. Sale, pp. 138, 142, 145. And White, p. 190. "Mahomet at one time beheaded near ſeven hundred Koraidhites, his priſoners, under the moſt aggravating circumſtances of cruelty. The command was not iſſued in the heat of action, when his paſſions were inflamed by the oppoſition which had been made to his power; but after his return to Medina, after a conſiderable ſpace had elapſed, and given time for his reſentment to cool, and for the feelings of humanity to exert their influence in his breaſt. See Abu'l Feda, p. 79."

'The Deity is afterwards introduced in the Koran, giving the ſanction of his approbation to this diſgraceful act of ſavage barbarity.—"A part of them ye ſlew, and a part of them ye made captives; and God hath cauſed you to inherit their land, and their houſes, and their wealth." Chap. xxxiii.' Notes on the Bampt. Lect. p. 33.

mountable objections to the authority of the Prophet, as well as to the ſanctity of the oracle.

HENCE,

The conduct of Mahomet in his wars has been inſidiouſly compared with that of Moſes and Samuel; and it has been argued, that the firſt might with as much reaſon alledge the divine ſanction for his proceedings as the latter could for their's. I confeſs that my memory does not ſupply an inſtance from the Hiſtory of the Wars of the Iſraelites, which deſerves to be at all compared with this deliberate and uſeleſs act of cruelty. This however is not the place for diſcuſſing the queſtion fully *. I ſhall therefore content myſelf with one or two general remarks. Not to inſiſt upon other points of compariſon manifeſtly in favour of Moſes, it muſt be remembered, that the law was diſpenſed nearly 1500 years *before* Chriſt; and after every deduction which ignorance or prejudice can make, it certainly contained a ſyſtem of morals and religion far ſuperiour to any, with which the world had then had an opportunity of becoming acquainted. The pretended miſſion of Mahomet took place 600 years *after* Chriſt, and both in theory and practice was greatly inferiour to the moral and religious code, which had been ſo long publiſhed to the world.

The law of Moſes is not repreſented in Scripture as being perfect, or of unlimited duration †: but it is ſpoken of as preparatory to a more excellent ſyſtem, which was to be revealed in after ages.—Still a candid inquirer will allow it to have been moſt wiſely and moſt kindly adapted to the ſtate, in which mankind were at the time, when it was diſpenſed. The law of Mahomet on the contrary did avowedly profeſs to be perfect; but certainly, although it introduced ſome local improvements, and taught the important truth of the unity of God, (which however was borrowed) yet in other reſpects it cannot claim any decided ſuperiority over many human inſtitutions; thoſe of Athens or Rome for inſtance; ſtill leſs can it realize it's pretenſions as a divine revelation, poſterior, and therefore ſuperiour to the law of Jeſus Chriſt.

* On this ſubject ſee Lettres de quelques Juifs Portugais, &c. à M. De Voltaire, Part. iv. Lett. 11. Sect. 4.

† Ezek. xx. 25. Galat. iii. 19. iv. 9. Heb. x. 1. See alſo Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. book II. chap. VII.

HENCE, in addition to the blow given to the pretenſions of the Koran, the character of it's Author is degraded and deſtroyed. Since, inſtead of ſetting a fair example of conformity to his own precepts, favourable as they were to the indulgence of the paſſions, we find, that he openly ſet up a claim of exemption from the laws, which he pretended a divine commiſſion to deliver:— a ſpecies of conduct, which at once tears off the maſk from the impoſtor, and ſtrips him of all pretence to veracity.

BESIDES theſe internal defects, we might urge, if neceſſary, the deficiency of external proof for it's authenticity. It is allowed by the Mahometans that the Koran was never made public in it's preſent form by their Prophet; but that it was collected and publiſhed by his friend and ſucceſſor, Abubeker, and was afterwards reviſed by the Caliph Othman in the thirtieth year of the Hegira *. As in theſe publications reference was had to thoſe followers, who had treaſured in their memories ſuch parcels of the divine book as were miſlaid, and as it is allowed that the ſucceeding Editors ſent it into

* See Gibbon, p. 208. Sale, 64, 65. Prideaux, 16, 17.

into the world without any regard to the order of time in which the chapters were revealed; it is obvious to remark how ſuſpicious the authenticity of the Koran is become. It is however a ſource of never-failing conſolation to the faithful Muſulman, "that the various editions of the Koran aſſert the ſame miraculous privilege of an uniform and incorruptible text*." Indeed the queſtion of authenticity extends itſelf to all the facts related of Mahomet and the origin of his religion; and places the evidence for ſimilar facts relating to Chriſtian antiquity in a ſtrong point of view. Gibbon, who is certainly entitled to the praiſe of ſparing no pains to collect the earlieſt and moſt authentic materials, is compelled to follow, as his principal authorities, Abulfeda "an enlightened Prince" of the fourteenth, and Al Jannabi, "a credulous Doctor," of the ſixteenth century. Indeed he fairly allows, that "both Abulfeda and Al Jannabi are modern hiſtorians, and that they cannot appeal to any writers of the firſt century of the Hegira†."

It is impoſſible to cloſe this account of the doctrines and conduct of the celebrated Impoſtor,

* Gibbon ubi ſuprà. † See note in page 220.

Impoſtor, without remarking the fatal and deciſive evidence which the circumſtances of his death ſupply, in direct contradiction to his pretenſions. A Jewiſh female of Chaibar, being deſirous to aſcertain the truth of theſe pretenſions, placed before him at ſupper a poiſoned diſh, of which one of his companions, eating greedily, immediately died. The pretended Prophet, who partook of it in leſs abundance, nevertheleſs only found his fate deferred. His health was ſo much injured by this ſucceſsful eſſay of curioſity and revenge, that, after lauguiſhing three years, he died in conſequence of thus failing to realize his claim to that prophetic knowledge, which he ſo arrogantly aſſerted. Theſe facts, which are confeſſed by his warmeſt admirers*, ſurely place in the cleareſt point of view the fallacy of his declarations; and expoſe that impoſture, which he had been labouring but too ſucceſsfully to place beyond the reach of human diſcernment.

If therefore we fairly conſider the circumſtances under which the religion of Mahomet proſpered, taking into account the

* See the authorities cited by Gibbon, p. 246. and by Prideaux, pp. 94—101.

the manner in which it was propagated, and the form it continues to aſſume, ſurely it does not appear, that any argument can be derived from it's ſucceſs, to affect in the ſlighteſt degree the Chriſtian religion; but as certainly it does appear, that an Impoſtor of the moſt acknowledged abilities and the moſt undaunted courage, undertaking his deſigns at a juncture the moſt favourable, could not plan a ſcheme of ſuch a nature and extent, without betraying tokens of fraud the moſt groſs and palpable; nor without laying himſelf open to the view of all, who unite a ſpirit of candour with a deſire of accurate inveſtigation.

CHRISTIANITY appeared in a moſt enlightened age; it has attracted the notice, and challenged the ſcrutiny, of the acute and intelligent; yet in the ſpace of eighteen centuries, no one deciſive mark of fraud has been fixed upon as affecting the conduct or doctrines of it's founder. On the contrary, the more accurate the ſearch, and the more piercing the ſcrutiny, into it's authority, the characters of truth have appeared with undiminiſhed, nay, increaſed, luſtre.

IF the revolution of ſo many ages has failed to reveal one indubitable trace of fallacy

lacy in the origin of our Holy religion; if the labours of ſo many intellects have been baffled in the attempt to ſtigmatize it as indebted to fraud or enthuſiaſm for it's ſucceſs, is it probable that a few more ages rolling on ſhall unfold the hitherto undiſcovered ſecret of it's human birth? Are the ſages yet unborn, who ſhall probe to the quick the latent wound, which has ſo long rankled, without betraying one ſymptom of unſoundneſs?

UNTIL ſuch exalted ſpirits ſhall appear, and ſuch wondrous ages arrive, why may we not content ourſelves with believing that, which is ſo far from having been proved incredible, that it has on the contrary been found to poſſeſs all the marks of credibility, which in any ſimilar queſtion the human underſtanding can require?

SURELY, in the religion of Jeſus, there is ſufficient evidence to warrant our faith, ſufficient authority to regulate our conduct, and ſufficient encouragement to elevate and ſuſtain our hope.

L. B.

QUÆ ſequuntur orationes coràm Academiâ Cantabrigienſi ſunt habitæ; una quidem in Scholis Theologicis*, altera verò in Templo Beatæ Mariæ†; priuſquàm Baccalaureatûs in Theologiâ gradum ſuſceperim. Quùm eas pronunciâſſem, impensè à me petebant nonnulli ex amicis meis, ut eas prælo ſubjicerem. Horum igitur ſive benevolentiæ in me ſingulari, ſive in litteras humaniores ſtudio honeſtiſſimo ut obſecundarem, hîc eas excudendas curavi: eóquè libentiùs id feci, quòd materies earum cum cæteris rebus, quæ in hoc libello continentur, aptiſſimè cohæreat. Nimirùm, quæ hîc leguntur, ſcripta à me ſunt omnia uno eodémque conſilio, ut pro virili oſtenderem Revelatam Religionem unicè dignam videri, quam boni cordatíque homines pleno aſſenſu approbent, ſummâque reverentiâ proſequantur. De laude autem vel doctrinæ, quæ exquiſitior ſit, vel ſermonis, qui luminibus verborum diſtinguatur, non ita ſolicitus ſum, modò diligentia mea, atque animus in veritatem propenſus, candidis rerum æſtimatoribus ſe probaverint.

VALE, L. B. et meas haſce, qualeſcunque ſunt, in pietate promovendâ curas, æqui et boni facias.

THESIS

* IX. Calend. Mart. A.D. 1799.
† IV. Non. Novemb. A.D. 1799.

THESIS, &c.

NEQUIT per ſe humanâ ratio, cognitione ſatis plenâ et certâ aſſequi, quo potiſſimùm modo Deus ſit colendus, quæ ſint hominum officia, vita denique futura ſit, nécne, æterna.

SI quis, veterum Philoſophorum in explorandis morum ac religionis principiis cùm diligentiam ſolicitudinémque, tùm ignorantiam in pleriſque et inconſtantiam *, ſecum reputaverit, operæ eum ab illis fruſtrà impenſæ neceſſe eſt miſereſcat. Spem autem à nonnullis eorum conceptam †, fore aliquando, ut plenam conſiliorum ſuorum cognitionem Deus hominibus concederet, quotus eſt quiſque qui non exoptet felicem exitum habuiſſe? Meritò etiam ſibi colligere quiſpiam videretur, cùm in hiſce quæſtionibus

* "Jam de Platonis inconſtantiâ longum eſt dicere; qui in Timæo patrem hujus mundi nominari neget poſſe, in legum autem libris quid ſit omninò Deus, anquiri oportere non cenſeat." Cic. de Nat. Deor. Lib. 1. ſect. 12.

Qui Platonis patrocinium ſuſcipere volunt, ad diſtinctionem inter diſciplinam ejus eſotericam, ut aiunt, et exotericam confugient.

† Vide omninò Platonem in Alcibiade IIdo. ad finem.

ſtionibus veritatem Deus patefeciſſet, tum demùm neminem futurum eſſe, qui tale tantúmque munus non arriperet, gratóque animo ejus auctori acceptum redderet.

ALITER ſe rem habere, ac ratio et æquitas poſtulaverint, id verò magnopere dolendum eſt. Tantum enim abeſt, ut omnes qui ope revelationis frui poſſint, vel muneris ipſius quod ſit pretium, vel fontem, unde profluxerit, confiteri velint, ut iſtorum, qui ſe philoſophos profiteantur, alii ſaluberrima pietatis principia audacter convellant; alii vera quidem et utilia eſſe agnoſcant, ſed è ſuorum ingeniorum penu affatim deprompta eſſe contendant. Revelatæ autem religionis quàm maximè intereſt, cùm illorum dementiam refrænari, tùm refelli ac redargui horum pertinaciam. Etenim ſi præcepta ejus neque ſana neque utilia ſint, jure optimo ea penitùs aſpernaremur. Sin iſtiuſmodi ſint, ut homines ſuis viribus freti pleraque eorum indagare potuerint, multum certè utilitatis auctoritatíſque ſacris ſcripturis decedet.—Quamobrem in id potiſſimùm operam dabo, ut oſtendam humanam rationem, ò ſuis tantummodò opibus fiſam, nunquam attigiſſe rerum ad nos maximè pertinentium eam cognitionem, per quam

ſolam, et nunc, et in æternum verè felices eſſe poſſimus. Sunt autem illæ res arctiſſimo vinculo inter ſe conjunctæ; quippè quæ ad Dei cultum, ad hominum inter homines ſocietate devinctorum officia, et ad vitæ ſpem futuræ pertineant.

Haud me fugit, argumenta hæc mea quibuſdam philoſophis videri, non ſolùm à vero, ſed à conſuetudine ſenſûs communis, prorsùs abhorrere. Equidem ab iſtis acutulis et minutulis diſputatoribus me contemni haud ægrè tulerim. Id verò in primis mihi cavendum eſt, ne fortè inter ipſos revelatæ religionis patronos reperiantur, qui me velle rationis noſtræ viribus nimium quantum detrahere ſuſpicentur. Pace igitur horum virorum dixerim, me non ignarum eſſe, ad quantas res obeundas mens humana ſit idonea; quot et quales in artibus, vel ad uſum vitæ, vel ad elegantiam neceſſariis, fecerit progreſſus; quàm ſit felicitèr verſata in omni ſcientiâ, quæ in rerum externarum proprietatibus inveſtigandis occupetur. Neutiquam id auſim denegare in ſpatiis hujus Academiæ, quæ non modò in ſinu ſuo foverit Baconum et Newtonum, verùm etiam juvenes præſtantiſſimos quotidiè alat, qui leges, à quibus pendeat univerſus orbis, accuratè

accuratè inveſtigent, ſolíſque ipſius magnitudinem, ſiderum curſus, et lucis velocitatem dimetiri ſoleant. Sed, ut mihi videtur, jam indè a primâ mundi origine mentis humanæ vires certo quodam limite contentæ ſunt ac definitæ. Scilicet quæcunque ſub ſenſuum, qui vocantur, cognitionem cadant, aut analogiâ quâdam ad ea pertinere videantur, quodcunque animus in ſe converſus de origine et conjunctione idearum ſibimet patefacere poſſit, ea ſunt omnia intellectûs humani proprium quoddam aucupium et pabulum ſaluberrimum. At verò quæ ſenſuum iſtorum captum omninò fugiant, neque cum rebus, in quibus percipiendis verſantur, nexæ et jugatæ ſint, neque ad motus animi, cùm ſe contempletur, ullo modo pertineant, ea crediderim diu in tenebris Deum abdidiſſe, donec revelatæ lux religionis fauſtè atque auſpicatò mortalibus affulſiſſet.

Ut ut hæc ſunt, (neque enim conjecturæ auſim in re tantâ vel minimum concedere) hiſtoriâ uſus duce, rem ad examen revocaverim. Fuit profectò tempus, cùm homines à ſummâ rerum ſcientiâ inſtructi, maximóque ingenii acumine præditi, vires ſuas omnes ad contemplationem τῶν θείων dirigerent. Græci ſcilicet Romaníque ſcriptores

tores per multa ſæcula in id incubuerunt, ut, quod ſit ſummum bonum, quæ deorum ipſorum natura, vitæ humanæ qui ſit finis, intelligerent. Horum igitur operibus diligenter excuſſis, dubium non eſt quin id, quod in hujuſmodi quæſtionibus ratio efficere per ſe poſſit, pro explorato habeatur.

Sed priuſquàm de rebus ſingulis ſeriatim diſſeramus, perquàm utile erit præmonere, magnum quoddam diſcrimen intereſſe eas inter res, quas vi ſuapte ratio humana aſſequi poſſit, et eas, quas, cum aliundè patefactæ ſint, ſuffragio ſuo comprobaverit. Enimverò perpauci ſunt, quibus contigerit ea, quæ de mundi opificio Newtonus, aut de mente humanâ Lockius repererit, meditando extundere. At reperta et in lucem prolata quotus eſt quiſque qui non intelligat, et pro veriſſimis habeat?—Neque illud ſilentio prætereundum eſt, Deum (quæ eſt ejus benevolentia) homines non paſſum eſſe omninò inſcios errare, utrùm aliquod numen exiſtat, aut quænam debeant, vel ad favorem ejus conciliandum, vel ad iram avertendam, officia præſtari. Hiſtoria, tùm ſacra, tùm profana, argumento eſſe poterit, multa illum quæ ad vitam rectè agendam ſpectent, hominibus ab ipſis rerum cunabulis revelâſſe *. Veriſimile eſt porrò, poſtea quàm Deus humanum genus

genus nequitiæ deditum gravi exitio demerſiſſet, pleniùs eadem illum communicaviſſe Noacho, à quo per totum orbem terrarum præcipua religionis et morum capita innoteſcerent. Teſtes ſunt de hâc re non modò illi, quos appellavimus, ſacri annales, verùm etiam rerum humanarum hiſtoria; ſiquidem quo eam altiùs repetamus, eò in ſaniora principia religionis omni ex parte incidimus. Nimirùm quicquid inter Philoſophorum deliramenta et commenta Sacerdotum à vero propiùs abeſt, id omne opinionibus famâ divulgatis, et ab ævo longè antiquiore traditis, prôfluxiſſe credibile eſt.

Quoniam autem nonnulli religionis revelatæ fautores de limitibus, intra quos humana ratio circumſcripta ſit, nonnihil inter ſe diſcrepârunt, nolim equidem in rè tantâ quidquam incerti relinquere. Videor itaque mihi tutam omninò et facilem viam iniiſſe, cùm partes illas, de quibus anteà dixi, mihi expendendas propoſuerim. Graves ſunt illæ quidem, et in primis tùm ad contemplandum jucundæ, tùm ad rectè vivendum neceſſariæ. Poſitis igitur, quibus inſiſtere velim, fundamentis, ſuo quamque ordine rem exſequar.

Quod ad primam attinet, pro certiſſimo habendum

* Vid. Leland: de Utilitate et Neceſſitate Chriſtianæ Religionis, part I. capp. 1, 2. Part. III. c. 2.

habendum eſt, oportere, priuſquàm Deum ritè et aptè colere poſſimus, fixum ratúmque in animo nos tenere, utrùm omninò ſit Deus, qualis ſit, atque adeò cujuſmodi ſit ea neceſſitudo, quæ inter ipſum et homines intercedat. Dato enim re verâ eſſe Deum, neutiquam idcircò comparebit cætera ad eum pertinentia poſſe nos reperire. Indè factum eſt ut permulti dubitaverint, an numen, tam immenſo intervallo à mortalibus diſſitum, ullâ eos curâ dignaretur? An preces, quas nunquam poſtulâſſet, et vota eorum accepturus eſſet? An homines ei, qui omninò omnia cognoverit, ſuas quiſque ærumnas, ſuos errores, ſua peccata longâ verborum ſerie aperire deberent? An veri rectíque ratio pateretur, ut ab eo, qui ſuâ ſponte cum univerſo genere humano optimè actum eſſe ſtatuiſſet, opem quiſpiam aut ſolatium peteret?—Cultus igitur ullus Deo ſit, nécne, præſtandus, perdifficilis viſa eſt Philoſophis benè multis et perobſcura quæſtio. Qualis porrò cultus eſt is, qui præſtari debet? Is, credo, quem potiſſimùm illi placiturum eſſe arbitremur. At quâ tandem viâ ad numinis de hâc re voluntatem homo pervenerit? Me quidem fateor neſcire, quo ſe modo in re tam gravi támque reconditâ ratio humana expediverit. Deo quæ maximè placeant, Dei

eſt

eſt, nî fallor, ſolius cumulatè et apertè demonſtrare. Hoc autem poſito, nihil eſt cur miremur homines, ratione tantummodò uſos, à recto tramite ſæpiſſimè aberraviſſe.

Disserens de eo, quod opinione et famâ hominum inveteraſcit, Cicero ſtatuit inter probabilia, "eos, qui philoſophiæ dent operam, non arbitrari Deos eſſe*." Hoc quàm latè pateat in Democriti et Epicuri aſſeclas, nemo eſt qui ignoret. Illud intereà conſtat, homines, etſi cogitationibus ſuis reperîſſent eſſe quandam vim divinam, à quâ ortum ipſi duxiſſent, de naturâ tamen illius dubios hæſiſſe. Prætereà, unum eſſe Deum ne ſomniâſſe quidem videntur. Contrà ea, quot eſſent Dii, quantùm inter ſe diſcrepârint, ubinam degerint, ullâne, an maximâ, curâ reſpexerint mortales, hîſce de rebus anxiè ſemper diſputatum eſt. Profectò nihil eſt tam ineptum aut pravum, quod non unus et alter ex antiquis Philoſophis de naturâ Deorum excogitaverit.

Dato autem priùs oportere de ipſo Deo rectè nos ſentire, quàm definiri poſſit modus quo ſit colendus, ſimile eſt vero homines, nullâ revelationis notitiâ imbutos, alios cultus

* De Invent. Lib. I. p. 68. Edit. Gruter.

cultus quàm illum, qui ſanus eſſet, approbâſſe *. Deos ſi finxiſſent, aut nullam de rebus humanis curam impendere, aut malignos eſſe, vel diſcordes, vel laſcivos, fieri non potuit, quin omnem cultum negligerent, aut ad eum, qui eſſet futilis et deformis, confugerent. Quid eſt, quod vel ritus impuros Veneris commemorem, vel Bacchi orgia ſcelerata et furioſa †? Eſtne provocandum ad ſacerdotes Matris Deorum, an ad Flamines Martiales, an ad Panis Lupercalia? Scilicet mirificum quiddam et pulcerimum eſſe debebat pietas eorum, qui numinis iram cenſuerint tum denique poſſe placari efficaciſſimè, cùm ſuper altaria illius effunderetur plurimum ſanguinis humani ‡.

PUDET

* Καὶ τὰ περὶ εὐσεβείας δὲ καὶ θεῶν πεπλήρωται πολλῆς διαφωνίας. Θεοὺς γὰρ οἱ μὲν πολλοί φασιν εἶναι, τινὲς δὲ, οὐκ εἶναι. * * * * καὶ τῶν εἶναι θεοὺς ἀποφηναμένων, οἱ μὲν τὲς πατρίους νομίζουσι θεούς· οἱ δὲ, τὲς ἐν ταῖς δογματικαῖς αἱρέσεσιν ἀναπλασσομένους. * * Καὶ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον, οἱ μὲν ἔνα φασιν εἶναι Θεὸν, οἱ δὲ πολλὲς καὶ διαφόρους ταῖς μορφαῖς, ὡς καὶ εἰς τὰς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ὑπολήψεις ἐκπίπτειν, κυνοπροσώπους, καὶ ἱερακομόρφους, καὶ βοας, καὶ κροκοδείλους, καί τι γὰρ οὐχὶ νομιζόντων τὲς Θεούς; ὅθεν καὶ τὰ περὶ θυσιῶν, καὶ τῆς περὶ τὲς θεὲς θρησκείας ὅλως πολλὴν ἀνωμαλίαν ἔχει. Sexti Empirici Hypotyp. Lib. III. pag. 155. Edit. Genev.

† Vid. Ovid. Metam. Lib. iii. 532. xi. 15, &c. Eurip. Bacch. paſsim.

‡ Vid. Jenkin. de Rationalitat. et Certitud. Religionis Chriſtianæ Tom. I. p. 339. Edit. 3a. et commentarium viri doctiſſimi Jacobi Bryant de ἀνθρωποθυσίᾳ καὶ τεκνοθυσίᾳ. Pag. 267. Obſervations and Inquiries, 4to. 1767.

PUDET mehercule pigétque me diutiùs referre, quàm turpiter ratione abuſi ſint iſti pietatis magiſtri, et quàm fœdè vulgùs credulum ac delirum ludificati. Libet potiùs Philoſophi cujuſdam inſignis verba laudare, ut evincam pleraſque veterum de Diis ſententias eſſe à vero longè alienas. "Expoſui ferè (inquit Cicero) non philoſophorum judicia, ſed delirantium ſomnia: nec enim multo abſurdiora ſunt ea, quæ poëtarum vocibus fuſa, ipsâ ſuavitate nocuerunt: qui et irâ inflammatos, et libidine furentes induxerunt Deos: fecerúntque, ut eorum bella, pugnas, prælia, vulnera videremus; odia prætereà, diſſidia, diſcordias, ortus, interitus, querelas, lamentationes, effuſas in omni intemperantiâ libidines, adulteria, vincula, cum humano genere concubitus, mortaléſque ex immortali procreatos. Cum poëtarum autem errore conjungere licet portenta magorum, Ægyptiorúmque in eodem genere dementiam: tum etiam vulgi opiniones, quæ in maximâ inconſtantiâ, veritatis ignoratione verſantur *."

ATQUI ſubmurmurabunt religionis naturalis fautores inſulſis hiſce et portentoſis opinionibus

* De Nat. Deor. Lib. I. ſect. 16. Edit. Erneſti.

opinionibus neſcio quid *recondite* ſubeſſe, quod, cùm exploratum fuerit, ad veritatem propiùs acceſſerit.—Operam credo atque oleum omnes perdidiſſe, qui per hæc involucra et integumenta ſe perſpicere aliquid veri poſſe jactaverint. Monitos intereà illud volo Philoſophorum patronos, etſi altum quiddam atque excelſum ipſi philoſophi nonunquam ſaperent, plebeculam tamen fœdiſſimè delirare. Nimirùm apud vulgus ea fuit de Diis opinio, quam fabellæ poëtarum et mythologorum nugæ ſubminiſtrarent. Quod autem ad cultum Deorum attinet, unus apud omnes ſermo increbuit, Deos patrios eſſe pro more patrio colendos. Qui decantatum illud Pythagoræ præceptum legerit,

Ἀθανάτες μὲν πρῶτα θεὺς, νόμῳ ὡς διάκειται,
Τίμα,

probè is cognoverit, quid de totâ re uno orè omnes philoſophantium familiæ ſtatuerint. Immò Socrates, quem Philoſophorum omnium facilè principem eſſe confitebor, eandem, quam cæteri de hoc grege, opinionem ſemper præ ſe tulit. Nam, quod objecerint ejus accuſatores, eum in rebus ad cultum Deorum pertinentibus novi aliquid docuiſſe,

docuiſſe, id quidem de ſe dictum eſſe indignè paſſus eſt, et tanquam graviſſimum opprobrium acerrimè repulit.

Deorum profectò cultus tùm inter Græcos tùm Romanos mihi ſemper viſus eſt ad πολίτειαν tantummodò pertinere. Liquidò patet et Athenis et Romæ civiles magiſtratus rebus ſacris adminiſtrandis præfuiſſe; id quod antiquiſſimis etiam temporibus factitatum legimus, cùm eſſet

Rex Anius, rex idem hominum, Phœbique ſacerdos*.

Quantùm igitur Religio illa, quæ à metu orta eſt, et plerumque in meris cæremoniis poſita, valere putabatur in rebus politicis †, tanti à Philoſophis et Magiſtratibus æſtimabatur. At verò Pietas ea, quæ caſtos homines, probóſque, et benevolos reddit; quæ ad res cœleſtes contemplandas animum incitat erigítque; quæ denique ad Deum ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ * venerandum inſtituit nos atque inſtruit,

* Virg. Æn. III. 80.

† Ἔνιοι τοίνυν ἔφασαν τὰς πρώτας τῶν ἀνθρώπων προσάντας, καὶ τὸ σύμφερον τῷ βίῳ σκιψαμένας, πάνυ συνετὰς ὄντας, ἀναπλάσαι τὴν περί τι τῶν θειῶν ὑπόνοιαν, καὶ τὴν περὶ τῶν ἐν ᾅδου μυθευομένην δόξαν. * * * ἐπισχεῖν βουλόμενοι τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας, πρῶτον μὲν νόμους ἔθεντο πρὸς τὸ τοὺς φανερῶς ἀδικοῦντας κολάζεσθαι. μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ θεὸς ἀνέπλασαν ἐπόπτας φαύλων τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἁμαρτημάτων τε καὶ κατορθωμάτων. Sexti Empirici adv. Mathematicos, pp. 310, 311, Edit. Gen.

* Joh. iv. 24.

inſtruit, de hâc ſanè vix aut ne vix quidem cogitâſſe videntur aut ii, penes quos erat publica cultûs divini ratio, aut ii, qui Philoſophiam, quaſi optimarum rerum cognitionem, excolebant. Quòd ſi Græci Romaníque in re tantâ cæcutiverint, ſupervacaneum eſſet ad alias gentes reſpicere. Enimverò humana iſta ſacrificia, quæ ſunt à Septentrionalibus populis frequentata, Solis atquè ignis cultus qui in Oriente increbuit paſsìm atque invaluit, prava denique illa et periculoſa de duobus æquè potentibus boni et mali auctoribus opinio, hæc, inquam, omnia exemplo eſſe poſſunt, quantulum ratio humana perfecerit in religione, vel quà obſcura ſit, illuſtrandâ, vel quà depravata fuerit, corrigendâ.

De parte noſtræ quæſtionis primâ hæc ſufficiant.—Ad amuſſim igitur ea exigamus, quæ de hominum inter homines ſocietate devinctorum officiis mens humana, ſuis tantummodò viribus freta, compererit.

Erunt fortaſsè qui ſatis cauſæ eſſe putent, cur in rebus ab intelligentiâ noſtrâ remotiſſimis vacillet animus et aliquantulùm titubet; contendant tamen, vi ſuâpte eum poſſe legem aliquam morum et vivendi normam non ſolùm percipere, ſed et invenire. Equidem

dem non is ſum, qui diffitear veterum quorundam ſcripta Ethica acri judicio eſſe maximâque diligentiâ elaborata. Pari autem jure contenderim, plurima eorum eſſe floſculis ſententiarum conſperſa, et aureo quodam flumine eloquentiæ ſe legentibus probare. Multa in illis videntur requiri ad plenam ſolidámque officiorum effigiem exprimendam. Illa porrò ipſa, quæ ad Deum pertinent, officia permagnam habent cum virtutibus ferè omnibus neceſſitudinem. Undè factum eſt, ut, qui in deorum cultu graviſſimè erraverint, ſapientiam in rebus civilibus abſolutam et perfectam non attigerint. Etenim ſi multi ſint Dii, id quod plerique veterum exiſtimabant, morum profectò regulam mutari oportet, prout rectè de iis aut pravè ſuo quiſque animo conceperit.—Si diverſos et inter ſe diſcordes Deos fingamus, diverſa neceſſe eſt intérque ſe diſcordia officia ſint in Eos præſtanda.—Si imbecillos putemus eſſe deſidéſque, qui nec capiantur benè promeritis, neque irâ tangantur, ſceleſtiſſimus quiſque et integerrimus pariter fuerit eorum ſecurus. Miſſis autem vitæ futuræ cùm præmiis, tùm pœnis, quæ à Deorum juſtitiâ pendeant, fieri

fieri non poteſt quin multæ ſint virtutes tantùm inchoatæ imperfectæque, multáque vitia radices ſuas altiùs agant. Veteres cùm Philoſophos, tùm legum latores, aliquâ ex parte laudandos eſſe lubens agnoſco. Civem quæ faciunt patriæ idoneum et urbi utilem, ea fermè omnia ſunt in legum tabulis et in libris ſapientium aptè deſcripta. Profectò, cùm ratione, tùm ipsâ neceſſitate quodammodò duce, homines cavebant, ne vinculum ſocietatis diſſolveretur: cavebant, ne funditùs tolleretur reſpublica: cavebant, ne malorum hominum audacia et furor in vitam fortunáſque civium impunitate et licentiâ ſempiternâ impetum faceret. Verùm enimverò in hâc ipsâ officiorum parte multa ſunt, quæ æquus prudénſque rerum æſtimator deſideraverit. Athenienſes, apud quos genera doctrinarum ferè omnia vel reperta ſunt vel perfecta, ipſum nomen hominis in gyrum nimìs arctum contrahebant. Qui τὸ ἑλληνικὸν ſummis laudibus efferebant, iidem τὸ βάρβαρον contemptu atque odio proſequebantur *.

Moris eſt multis plenâ manu plaudere Comici hæc verba:

Homo

* Vid. Plat. de Rep. Lib. V. ap. Lel. Tom. II. p. 122.

Homo ſum, humani nihil à me alienum puto.

QUÆ tamen ſententia viro cuidam doctiſſimo* non Philoſophiæ gravitatem, ſed perſonæ ſignificationem, continere, atque adeò ad riſum captandum efficta eſſe videbatur. Quicquid autem de argumentis ejus ſtatuerimus, neminem credo inter Ethnicos exſtitiſſe, qui "non ſibi, ſed toti mundo ſe genitum crediderit."

UNUS fortè atque alter reperiri poteſt, qui de caritate totius generis humani ſplendidè et compoſitè diſſeruerit. Atqui benevolentiam, quâ omnes complexi ſint, cancellis vel Eloquentiæ vel Philoſophiæ circumſcriptam eſſe, tùm captivorum cædes, tùm ſervitiorum acerbiſſima conditio, cumulatiſſimè docent. Quis tandem eſt, cujus in mentem non ſubeat inhumana illa atque effera, et apud omnes ferè gentes non modò uſu comprobata, verùm etiam legibus ſancita, infantes exponendi conſuetudo? Quem porrò non indignatione atque horrore percellunt belluina iſta Amphitheatri ſpectacula, in quibus homines ſunt, inter lætitiam et plauſus hominum, fœdiſſimè trucidati?

JAM

* Vid. Hurd. De Muneribus Dramat. ad fin. Commentar. in Epiſt. ad Auguſtum. Tom. II. p. 200. Vid. etiam Warburton. de Div. Legat. Moſis, Lib. I. ſect. 4. apud Leland. Tom. II. p. 59.

JAM verò quod attinet ad animi affectus, quos actionum humanarum fontes esse nemo non intelligit, annon constat ultionem ab ipsis morum informatoribus * non solido, sed splendido, nomine virtutis esse honestatam? E contrario, demissum animum humilémque, contumeliarum et injuriarum patientissimum, hunc, inquam, etiamsi laudabilis est naturâ, pauci fuerunt qui laudaverint. Nimirùm quicquid utile videbatur, id speciem honesti obscurabat, animósque omnium suâ sponte commovebat. Pro patriâ autem vel amicis dolos instruere, aut iis, quos in hostium numero ponerent, quo jure, quâve injuriâ, vim inferre, id verò pulcerrimum facinus existimabatur.

IN officiis, quæ sibi quisque præstare debet, designandis, infelicius quiddam ratio humana perpessa est, siquidem hisce in rebus regulam, quæ sibi maximè placuerit, suis quisque actionibus imposuit; et quod à se, arbitris remotis, fuerit peccatum, id Deos

* Φίλοις ἐνόει· ἐχθρὸς ἀμύνειν. Verba sunt Sosiadis in Concilio Sept. Sapient. Vide Stobæum in Sermone tertio, Tom. I. p. 47.

Εἶναι δὲ γλυκὺν ὅδε φίλοις, ἐχθροῖσι δὲ πικρόν·
Τοῖσι μὲν αἰδοῖον, τοῖσι δὲ δεινὸν ἰδεῖν.
Solon. Vid. Brunck. Anal. Tom. 1. p. 65.

Vide Jenkin. de Rat. et Cert. Relig. Christ. Tom. I. p. 349. et Leland. de Util. et Necess. Tom. II. p. 123.

Deos perindè atque homines fallere opinabatur. Itaque ergo incerti de vitâ futurâ aut pravè de conſiliis Deorum ſentientes, non ſecretò, ſed apertè ac palàm dictitabant, φάγωμεν καὶ πίωμεν· αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν *.

His de cauſis, præceps via et lubrica fuit in omne laſciviarum ac libidinum genus; neque enim à verecundo Chriſtiano nominari poſſunt, quæ in ſcholis quibuſdam Philoſophorum, tanquam in officinis nequitiæ, non modò ſunt ad diſputandum, verùm etiam ad vivendum propoſita. Ipſum quidem Platonem auctorem habemus, licere cuivis in Bacchanalibus uſque ad ebrietatem bibere †. Accepimus etiam de Catone noctes eum ſolere vino producere ‡; et de juvene, qui ad lupanar deſcendiſſet, verbis diſertis pronunciâſſe, "Macte eſto virtute ||."

Inter Græcos vigebat Philoſophia, cùm fabulas vel ſpurciſſimas magnâ cum laude Ariſto-

* 1 Cor. xv. 32. Εἰ δὶ τῇσι συνουσίῃσι τοῖσι ἰυδαίμοσι αὐτέων, ἐπειὰν ἀπὸ δείπνου γένωνται, περιφέρει ἀνὴρ νεκρὸν ἐν σορῷ ξύλινον πιποιημένον, μιμημένον ἐς τὰ μάλιστα καὶ γραφῇ καὶ ἔργῳ· μέγαθος ὅσον τε πάντη πηχυαῖον, ἢ δίπηχυν· δείκνυς δὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν συμποτέων, λέγει, "Ἐς τοῦτον ὁρέων, πῖνέ τε καὶ τέρπευ· ἔσεαι γὰρ ἀποθανὼν τοιοῦτος." ταῦτα μὲν παρὰ τὰ συμπόσια ποιεῦσι. Herodot. Lib. II. 78. Idem etiam aliis gentibus moris fuiſſe docent Plutarchus in Conviv. Sapient. Tom. II. p. 148. Edit. Xyl. et Petron. 34.

† Diog. Laert. in Vitâ Platonis.

‡ Plin. Epiſt. III. 12. || Horat. Sat. I. 2. 31.

Ariſtophanes doceret. Summè omnium doctrinarum ſtudioſi fuerunt Romani, eo tempore, quo Catullus dicere non erubuit, "verſiculos nec caſtos nec pios eſſe oportere." "Horret animus meminiſſe" turpitudinem rerum et verborum fœditatem, quæ oſtendunt Martialem et Petronium "Romani moris pudore" penitùs caruiſſe, Atqui "ſilentio is verecundiam *non* vindicaverit," qui de Stoicorum immanitate ſiluerit; ſiquidem notiſſimum eſt, hoſce vehementes et atroces Virtutis magiſtros multis argutiolis et captiunculis contendiſſe, "nuda rerum nomina haud vitanda eſſe," "nihil eſſe turpe dictu," "flagitium obſcœnitatis nullum unquam ineſſe, neque in rebus, neque verbis *."

Quid ſit καλοκἀγαθον, nonnulli Philoſophorum videntur probè perſpexiſſe, et pulcerrimis deſcripſiſſe lineamentis et coloribus. Verùm enimverò, à quibus illud principiis oriatur, ratione et viâ rarò docuerunt. Graviter porrò ab iis peccatum eſt, quòd ἐν τῇ καλοκἀγαθίᾳ explicandâ verbis uſi ſunt à communi hominum intelligentiâ alieniſſimis; ut parùm, vel ad virtutem illuſtrandam, vel ad

* Vid. Cic. De Offic. Lib. I. ſect. 35. Epiſt. ad Famil. Lib. IX. 22. Edit. Erneſt. et Quinctilian. Inſtitut. Orat. Lib. VIII. Cap. 3.

ad bonos mores promovendos, ſcripta eorum vel exquiſitiſſima contulerint. Memoriâ etiam tenendum eſt, Philoſophi uniuſcujuſque auctoritatem eatenùs valuiſſe, quatenùs aut argumenta ejus aliquid acuminis aut ſermo ſuavitatem habere videretur. Quòd ſi unus aliquis ex barbatis illis de officiis hominum vel optimè locutus eſſet, alius autem quæ faciliora eſſent ad agendum, vel ad audiendum gratiora propoſuiſſet, hunc magna pars hominum nunquam non ſequebantur, illum tantummodò laudabant. Qui Philoſophiam cum eloquentiâ conjunxerat, erat ſanè, ubi is aures, quarum eſt judicium ſuperbiſſimum, delinire et titillare potuerat. Qui autem virtutem malè defendendo prodidit, ejus demùm ſermo in ima auditorum præcordia deſcendebat. Hâc de causâ, ſi qui gloriolam aucupabantur Philoſophi, ad Rhetorum artes pernicioſas confugiebant, ſéque tum planè dignos, qui primas ferrent, judicabant, cùm plebeculæ πρὸς χάριν ἐδημηγόρουν. Profectò ſi indomitis atque effrænatis cupiditatibus nihil niſi mellitos verborum globulos oppoſueris, vix aut ne vix quidem unum inveneris Polemonem,

Potus ut ille
Dicitur ex collo furtim carpſiſſe coronas,
Poſtquàm eſt impranſi correptus voce magiſtri*.

Quoniam

* Hor. Sat. Lib. II. 3. 255.

Quoniam igitur officiorum, quæ ad ſocietatem pertinent, cognitio, tùm a Dei notitiâ, tùm à ſpe vitæ futuræ ſeparari non poteſt, niſi has fuerit apertè et exploratè animus aſſequutus, fruſtrà illam quæſiveris. Honeſti formam, ſi oculis cerneretur, Plato docuit mirabiles ſui amores non poſſe non excitare *. At verò detractâ omni utilitate, et in medio poſitis quæ naturâ ſuâ ſunt laudabilia, deſunt omnia, quibus præſentium voluptatum irritamenta leviora fiant et hebetiora. Ferunt Græcis Pugilibus magiſtros † ſolere diu adeſſe, qui eos certandi artem docerent; et præmium, quod labori reſponderet, prius eſſe propoſitum, quàm Agoniſtæ ſe ad certamen accingerent. —Hunc ferè in modum (quæ eſt noſtræ naturæ imbecillitas!) Deus neceſſe eſt quaſi morum informator nobis adſit, et, tanquam ſtimulum quendam, mentibus noſtris admoveat vitam in cœlis ſempiternam. Πᾶς δὲ ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος, πάντα ἐγκρατεύεται· ἐκεῖνοι μὲν ἵνα φθαρτὸν στέφανον λάβωσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄφθαρτον ‡.

TRAN-

* Cic. de offic. Lib. I. ſect. 5. de Fin. II. ſect. 16.

† Τοιγαροῦν ποικίλα τὰ γυμνάσια ἐπινοήσαντες, καὶ διδασκάλους ἑκάστων ἐπιστήσαντες, τὸν μέν τινα, πυκτεύειν, τὸν δὲ, παγκρατιάζειν διδάσκομεν, ὡς τάς τε ῥόπας παρτερεῖν ἐθίζοιντο, καὶ ἀμύνειν χερεῖν ταῖς πληγαῖς, μὴ δὲ ἀποτρέποιντο δέει τῶν τραυμάτων. Lucian. de Gymn. Tom. II. p. 286. Edit. Amſtel.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 25.

Transeamus jam ad partem noſtræ quæſtionis tertiam, in quâ quidem explicandâ mirum eſt quantâ caligine ſe opprimi, quantâ dubitatione impediri et perturbari veterum plerique confiteantur. Quoniam verò ſententiæ eorum ſunt vel obſcuræ vel diſcordes, quâ potero brevitate, rem omnem expediam.

Animam igitur poſt mortem haud perituram eſſe, non planè ad veritatem Philoſophis perſuaſum eſt; ſed ex vetere et populari, quæ apud multas gentes percrebuerat, famâ collectum. Hoc quò pleniùs intelligatur, in primis digna notatu ſunt verba hæc Ciceronis: "Auctoribus quidem ad iſtam ſententiam uti optimis poſſumus, quod in omnibus cauſis et debet, et ſolet, valere plurimùm: et primùm quidem omni antiquitate, quæ quò propiùs aberat ab ortu et divinâ progenie, hôc meliùs ea fortaſsè, quæ erant vera, cernebat. Itaque unum illud erat inſitum priſcis illis, quos caſcos appellat Ennius, eſſe in morte ſenſum, neque exceſſu vitæ ſic deleri hominem, ut funditùs interiret*." Jam quæ Ciceronis opinio eſt, eadem fuit Philoſophorum etiam illorum, qui argumentorum telis, quod in ſe fuit, animæ immor-

* Tuſc. Diſput. Lib. I. ſect. 12.

immortalitatem defenſitârunt. Socrates igitur in Phædone palàm agnoſcit ſe vitæ ſpem æternæ fovere, ὥσπερ γε πάλαι λέγεται †. Plato etiam, qui cum Socrate aſſiduiſſimè vixit, et Socraticarum ſententiarum defenſor fuit acerrimus, ſine ullis verborum ambagibus idem aſſerit. Πείθεσθαι δὲ ἔτως αἰεὶ χρὴ τοῖς παλαίοις καὶ ἱεροῖς λόγοις, οἳ δὴ μηνύουσιν ἡμῖν καὶ ἀθάνατον ψυχὴν εἶναι, δικαιάς τε ἴσχειν, καὶ τίνειν τὰς μεγίσας τιμωρίας, ὅταν τις ἀπαλλάχθῃ τοῦ σώματος *. Idem de ſe confitetur Ariſtoteles à Plutarcho † laudatus; idem ipſe Philoſophus Chæronenſis ‡; idem denique

* Plat. Op. p. 378. A. Ed. Lugd.

† Plat. Op. p. 716. A.

‡ Διόπερ, ὦ κράτιστε πάντων καὶ μακαριστότατε, καὶ πρὸς τοῦ μακαρίους καὶ εὐδαίμονας εἶναι τοὺς τετελευτηκότας νομίζειν, καὶ τὸ ψύεσθαί τι κατ' αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ βλασφημεῖν, οὐχ ὅσιον, ὡς κατὰ βελτιόνων, ἡγούμεθα, καὶ κρειττόνων ἤδη γεγονότων. Καὶ τοῦθ' ἔτως ἀρχαῖα καὶ παλαιὰ διατελεῖ νενομισμένα παρ' ἡμῖν, ὥστε τὸ παραίτων ὑδεὶς οἶδεν ὅτε τοῦ χρόνου τὴν ἀρχὴν, ὅτε τὸν θάνατα πρῶτον, ἀλλὰ τὸν ἄπειρον αἰῶνα τυγχάνουσι διὰ τέλους ὅτω νενομισμένα. Conſolat. ad Apol. Tom. II. p. 115.

‖ Εἰ δ' ὁ τῶν παλαιῶν τε ποιητῶν καὶ φιλοσόφων λόγος ἐστὶν ἀληθὴς, ὥσπερ εἰκὸς ἴσχειν, ἔτω καὶ τοῖς εὐσεβέσι τῶν μεταλλαξάντων ἐστί τις τιμὴ καὶ προσδοκία (καθάπερ λέγεται) καὶ χώρός τις ἀποτεταγμένος, ἐν ᾧ διατρίβουσιν αἱ τούτων ψυχαὶ, παλαὸς ἐλπίδας ἔχειν σε δεῖ περὶ τοῦ μακαρίτου υἱός σου, ὅτι τούτοις συγκαταριθμηθεὶς συνεῖναι. Plutarch. ib. 120. Hanc citationem, uti et eas, quæ proximè antecedunt, Lelando acceptas volo referre. Vid. Partis IIIæ. Caput. 2dum. Operæ pretium fuerit obitèr notare, ſi Herodoto fides habenda ſit, illam de animæ immortalitate opinionem primùm apud Ægyptios valuiſſe. Vid. Lib. II. ſect. 123.

que probant antiquiſſimi omnium gentium, vel cultarum, vel rudium, annales.

QUICQUID igitur in hâc quæſtione dictum eſt à Philoſophis probabile et propè verum, à primævis, credo, ſæculis ad eos dimanaverat. Atqui hominum, qui non modò in reconditis literis peregrini atque hoſpites eſſe debebant, ſed rerum ferè omnium, quæ ad civilem vitam ſpectant, rudes ignarique, horum, inquam, minimè ἄφυτος fuit, animas eſſe ſempiternas. Quin argumento eſt rei ipſius difficultas, non niſi per Deum aliquid poſſe homines de eâ certò cognoſcere. Cognitæ autem ejuſdem utilitas perſuaſum me facit, revelationem de eâ aliquam divinitùs fuiſſe hominibus conceſſam. Qui igitur animo diligenter perpenderit vel ea, de quibus Philoſophi fuerint dubii, vel ea, quæ de ignorantiâ ſuâ ſæpè ſint confeſſi, vel ea, quæ in ſcriptis eorum conjecturâ potiùs quàm argumentis niti videantur, parùm is in hâc quæſtione ſolvendâ rationem profeciſſe neceſſe eſt agnoſcat. Quæ cùm ita ſint, fateor me calculum meum adjicere viro cuidam* doctiſſimo, qui affirmat, "Socratem, non perſequendo ſeriem

* Campbell. de Neceſſit. Revel. ſect. 3. p. 100. et ſeq.

" ſeriem ullam idearum aut notionum, quæ " in mente alicujus è rerum naturâ vel pro- " prietatibus orirentur, quod ſit ſimile vero " attigiſſe. In Phædone enim illum videri " iis ſimillimum, qui fortè fortunâ in verita- " tem incidiſſent, quam tamen quarè am- " plexi ſint, ipſi ſint neſcii: diligenter " autem et ſollicitè quò ſententiam ſuam " tueantur, argumenta conquirentes, nihil " quod non ſit vel obſcurum, vel ἀπροσδιόνυσον, " in medium proferant." Itaque ergo cùm inſtaret hora, in quâ expectatio vitæ futuræ vacillantem Socratis animum et jacentem erigere deberet, animadvertite, quæſo, quàm lentè et, pænè dixerim, frigidè vir ille egregius in extremâ parte ſermonis egerit. Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἤδη ὥρα ἀπιέναι, ἐμοι μὲν, ἀποθανεμένῳ ὑμῶν δὲ, βιωσομένοις· ὁπότεροι δὲ ἡμῶν ἔρχονται ἐπὶ ἄμεινον πρᾶγμα, ἄδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ Θεῷ *.

Equidem Platonem fateor copiâ dicendi et gravitate Philoſophorum eſſe principem, neque Jovem † negaverim, ſi Græcè loqueretur, ſic fuiſſe locuturum. Rationes etiam, quas pro animæ immortalitate attulit, ejuſmodi ſunt, ut laudem mereantur iis à Cicerone datam, " velle eum cæteris, ſibi certè videri

* Apolog. ad fin. † Cicer. Brut. ſect. 31. Edit. Erneſt.

videri perſuaſiſſe *" In memoriâ tamen tenendum eſt, quales ille θρυλλούμενος Dialogus fructus ediderit. Etenim Catonem accepimus, perlecto illo, ſobrium et potentem, ſi quis alius, ſui, ruiſſe in voluntarium interitum.

AT dixerit quiſpiam, Stoicorum, qui id licere cuivis cenſuerint †, præceptis addictum, Catonem ſic de vitâ deceſſiſſe. Cauſam verò, quæ ita nectitur, idcircò ſtatuerim eſſe inanem, quòd Cleombrotus, cùm ab omni ægrimoniâ et dolore vacuus eſſet, et Socraticis, quos nuperrimè legiſſet, ſermonibus madidus, mortem ſibi conſciverit.

Εἶπας ΗΛΙΕ ΧΑΙΡΕ Κλεόμβροτος ὦ' μβρακιώτης
Ἦλατ' ἀφ' ὑψηλοῦ τείχεος εἰς Ἀΐδην,
Ἄξιον ἔτι παθὼν θανάτου κακὸν, ἀλλὰ Πλάτωνος
Ἓν, τὸ περὶ ψυχῆς, γράμμ' ἀναλεξάμενος ‡.

QUI harum rerum momenta diligenter et ſerio animo perpenderit, confiteatur neceſſe eſt, aut Platonis argumenta, etſi ſubtilia ſint, parùm ſincera eſſe, aut à ſimplicitate et pondere

* Tuſcul. Lib. 1.

† "Sæpè officium eſt Sapientis deſciſcere à vitâ, cùm ſit beatiſſimus, et id opportunè facere poſſit: quod eſt convenienter naturæ vivere."—Cic.

‡ Callimachus. Brunckii Analect. Tom. I. p. 474.

pondere disciplinæ Christianæ quàm longissimè distare.

Singulorum de animi immortalitate Philosophorum sententias percurrere infinitus esset et quidem inutilis labor. Detur mihi igitur instar omnium Cicero, qui aliorum opiniones penitùs intellexit, accuratéque et exquisitè de iis disputavit. Verba igitur ejus hæc audiamus. "Ut homunculus unus è multis," inquit, "probabilia conjecturâ sequens. Ultrà enim quò progrediar, quàm ut veri videam similia, non habeo *." Et recensitis aliorum de animâ humanâ ejúsque interitu sententiis, illud demùm adjungit. "Harum sententiarum, quæ vera sit, Deus aliquis viderit. Quæ verisimillima, magna quæstio est †."

Scite et compositè, dum in exercitatione umbratili versabatur, Cicero de hâc quæstione disseruit. At verò, cùm ad verum ei ventum est, langueíscere cœpit et infringi, qualiscunque demùm esset, ejus persuasio.— Nullum ei attulit doloris levamentum, nullum ægritudinis remedium, nullum contra mortis timorem solatium. Tulliola illa tantoperè amata cùm ei erepta esset, neque in

* Tusc. Quæst. Lib. I. sect. 9.
† Ibid. sect. 11.

in patris mæſtiſſimi, neque in amici *, qui eum conſolabatur, argumentis locus eſt datus ei opinioni, quæ mortem ſtatuit "non interitum eſſe omnia tollentem atque delentem, ſed quandam quaſi migrationem commutationémque vitæ †." Næ in oratione coràm populo habitâ Cicero ipſe, quæ viri inconſtantia fuit, nullâ omninò pœnâ apud inferos ſceleratiſſimum hominem affici contendit. "Nam nunc quidem quid tandem illi mali mors attulit? Niſi fortè "ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur, ut exiſtimemus "illum apud inferos impiorum ſupplicia perferre, ac plures illîc offendiſſe inimicos "quàm hîc reliquiſſe: à ſocrûs, ab uxorum, à "fratris, à liberûm pœnis actum eſſe præcipitem in ſceleratorum ſedem atque regionem. Quæ ſi falſa ſunt, id quod omnes "intelligunt, quid ei tandem aliud mors "eripuit, præter ſenſum doloris ‡?"

Verba hæc à ſapientiſſimorum virorum ſententiis minimè fuerunt aliena. Fuit enim pleriſque eorum perſuaſiſſimum, animam,

* Epiſt. ad Fam. Lib. IV. 5, 6.

† Tuſc. Quæſt. I. ſect. 12.

‡ Pro A. Cluentio. ſect. 61. Edit. Erneſti. Cum hiſce Ciceronianis conferenda ſunt Cæſaris argumenta, quibus in Senatu contendit "mortem cuncta mortalium mala diſſolvere; "ultrà neque curæ neque gaudio locum eſſe." Salluſt. Catal. C. LI. Ed. Waſſe.

mam, etſi poſt mortem durâſſet, nullis eſſe ſuppliciis obnoxiam: omnia ea, quæ de Orco dicerentur, Poetarum eſſe portenta ad plebeculam minaciter et inaniter terrendam aptiſſima*: Deos, ſi qui eſſent, ab irâ eſſe vacuos;—homines igitur, ſi reviveſcerent, omninò omnes futuros eſſe felices.

PHILOSOPHORUM hæc cantilena nullos potuit fructus afferre, vel ad mores hominum corrigendos, vel ad metus eorum dolorēſque relevandos. Multa quidem Stoici de pulcritudine virtutis, déque animi immortalitate verſutè ac ſubtiliter diſputabant. In eo tamen graviſſimè erraverunt, quòd animam dixerint, quaſi particulam quandam à naturâ divinâ primò diſcerptam eſſe, atque adeò in eandem debere poſt mortem refundi. Hoc quàm ſit à veritate alienum nemo non videt. Multis tamen et acutulis argumentis deliniti, qui à Zenone et Chryſippo ſtabant, haſce umbras falſæ Philoſophiæ conſectabantur. "Vix ulli fuêre "(quæ humanæ mentis caligo et imbecillitas "eſt) qui non inciderint in errorem illum de refuſione

* Ἐκπλάξ τις ἐγγὺς ἢ τῦ οἴεσθαι τελευτήσειν, εἰσέρχεται αὐτῷ δέος καὶ φροντὶς περὶ ὧν ἔμπροσθεν ἠδικήσει. εἴ τι γὰρ λεγόμενοι μῦθοι περὶ τῶν ἐν ἅδῃ, ὡς τὸν ἐνθάδε ἀδικήσαντα δεῖ ἐκεῖ διδόναι δίκην, καταγελώμενοι τίως, τότε δὲ γρίφουσιν αὐτῦ τὴν ψυχὴν, μὴ ἀληθεῖς ὦσι. Plat. de Rep. Lib. I. pag. 331. Edit. Serran.

" refuſione in animam mundi. Nimirùm " ſicut exiſtimârunt ſingulorum animas par- " ticulas eſſe animæ mundanæ, quarum quæ- " libet ſuo corpore, ut aqua vaſe, includitur, " ita et reputârunt unamquamque animam, " corpore diſſoluto, quaſi diffracto vaſe, ef- " fluere, atque animæ mundi, è quâ deducta " fuerit, iterùm uniri *."

Res, nî fallor, hûc redit. Philoſophi plerique omnes, qui in hâc quæſtione examinandâ plurimum vel acuminis vel auctoritatis habuerunt, opiniones ſuas, à vetuſto ævo receptas, argumentis ſæpè vel infirmis vel ineptis defenſitabant.

Qui animi immortalitatem vel apertè vel cuniculis oppugnabant, παραδόσεις illas venerandas, tanquam fabellas et ineptias aniles, ſapientiſſimo cuique deridendas, propinabant. Graviſſimos de eâ re auctores habemus Plinium et Ciceronem. " Puerilium iſta delini- " mentorum avidæque nunquam deſinere " mortalitatis commenta ſunt. . . . . Quæ " (malùm) iſta dementia eſt, iterari vitam " morte? quæve genitis quies unquam, ſi in " ſublimi ſenſus animæ manet, inter inferos " umbræ? Perdit profectò iſta dulcedo cre- " dulitáſque præcipuum naturæ bonum, " mortem:

* Gaſſend. apud Leland. Tom. II. p. 303. not.

"mortem: ac duplicat obitus, ſi dolere etiam "pòſt futuri æſtimatione contigit. Etenim "ſi dulce vivere eſt, cui poteſt eſſe vixiſſe? "At quantò facilius certiúſque, ſibi quem- "que credere, ac ſpecimen ſecuritatis ante- "genitali ſumere experimento *." "Cater- "væ" (inquit Cicero) "veniunt contra "dicentum, non ſolùm Epicureorum, quos "equidem non deſpicio, ſed neſcio quo modo "doctiſſimus quiſque contemnit: acerrimè "autem deliciæ meæ, Dicæarchus contra "hanc immortalitatem diſſeruit †."—Ad vulgus quod attinet, fieri non potuit, quin in partes diverſas inclinaret. Alii ſunt falſis terroribus ‡ perturbati; alii philoſophantium argutiis impliciti; alii denique audacter atque impiè pedibus iverunt in eam ſententiam, quæ libidinibus eorum daret fræna, et licentiæ vel fœdiſſimæ viam aperiret ||.

Hæc ſi vera ſunt,—ſi tales opiniones inſederunt, non ſolùm in animis infimæ multitudinis, verùm etiam eorum qui ſtudium ſuum

* Natur. Hiſt. Lib. VII. 56. Edit. Brotier.
† Tuſc. Quæſt. Lib. I. ſect. 31.
‡ Ibid. ſect. 5. Horat. Epiſt. Lib. II. 2. 208.
|| "Simul atque audivit à philoſopho voluptatem tantoperè laudari, nihil expiſcatus eſt; ſic ſuos ſenſus voluptarios omnes incitavit, ſic ad illius hanc orationem adhinniit, ut non magiſtrum virtutis, ſed auctorem libidinis à ſe illum inventum arbitraretur." Cic. in L. Piſonem, ſect. 28.

ſnum omne in doctrinâ excolendâ diligentiſſimè collocaverunt, quantulum eſt id, de quo gloriari et ſibi plaudere debeant fautores humanæ rationis? Poſito autem, veteres Philoſophos in tantâ quæſtione ſæpè et multùm erraviſſe, quæ tandem cauſa excogitari poteſt, cur recentiores, ſuo tantummodò ingenio niſi, ad veritatem propiùs acceſſerint?—Quicquid ſe cognitionis nomine commendat, certis quibuſdam definitíſque principiis inniti debet. In ipſo autem limine ſi titubetur, ratio ulteriùs progredi non poteſt. Probabilia quidem argumenta à nonnullis Philoſophis et ingeniosè conficta ſunt et in lucem prolata. Sunt tamen docti homines ac pii, qui putent per corporis vitâ et ſenſu carentis aſpectum, præberi animæ nunquam à mortuis excitandæ teſtimonium, quod longè ſuperet tùm conjecturas, tùm argumentationes, in aliam partem afferri ſolitas.

Credibile eſt igitur, niſi Deus cogitationibus noſtris quaſi facem prætuliſſet, vix aut ne vix quidem in mentem cujuſvis venire potuiſſe, vitam, quæ unà cum ſanguine effluere videatur, eſſe redituram. At anima, inquiunt, eſt quiddam à corpore ſejunctum. Quis verò eam oculis unquam uſurpavit? Aut qualis ſit, concepit? Aut concipere etiam potuit, quid de eâ actum ſit, corpore jam ex-

 tincto?

tincto?—Ut rerum igitur analogia atque ipſa experientia ad expectationem vitæ futuræ firmam et conſtantem nos ducant, tantùm abeſt, ut, niſi rei hujuſce cognitio fuiſſet à Deo profecta, aut omninò nullâ eſſet, aut nullâ ſaltèm auctoritate, quæ eam diuturnam et utilem redderet, ſtabilita. Minimè me fugit, ſcriptores nonnullos eſſe, graves pietate et judicio inſignes, qui analogiæ in hâc re magnum pondus eſſe exiſtiment. Mihi autem ipſi, cùm Philoſophorum ſententias, à revelationis auctoritate ſejunctas, acerrimè et attentiſſimè cogitatione verſarem, uſu id venire fateor, quod Ciceroni olim contigit. "Neſcio quo modo dum lego, "aſſentior: cùm poſui librum, et mecum "ipſe de immortalitate animorum cœpi cogi- "tare, aſſenſio omnis illa elabitur *."

"Stoicos" ait Cicero, "quod totâ in "hâc causâ difficillimum eſt, ſuſcipere, poſſe "animum manere corpore vacantem †."

Mihi

* Cic. Tuſc. Quæſt. Lib. I. ſect. 11. Vide etiam Legat. Divin. Warburtoni Lib. III. ſect. 3. Tom. II. pp. 186, 187.

† Quæ à me ita dicta ſunt, abſit ut quiſpiam putet maledicè et contumeliosè eſſe jactata in memoriam maximè venerandi Præſulis, Butleri τῦ μακαρίτυ.—Liber, quem prudens vir ille et gravis de Analogiâ ſcripſit, et acumine ingenii et ponderibus argumentorum meritò ab omnibus laudatur. In primâ autem illius parte, quæ ad vitæ ſpem futuræ potiſſimùm ſpectat, ſoleo nonnihil requirere ad probationem, qualem Analogia præſtare debeat, explicatè et diſtinctè conficiendam.

‡ Tuſc. Quæſt. Lib. I. ſect. 32.

Mihi autem nec "facile ad credendum illud" eſſe videtur; neque "eo, quod Stoici volunt, "conceſſo, conſequetur, ut, cùm diu perman-"ſerit, ne intereat." Vitam igitur ut pro cognito habeamus futuram eſſe, vel ſempiternam, vel omninò ullam; nodus iſte quidem eſt vel in primis vindice Deo dignus. Deum autem hanc difficillimam quæſtionem expediiſſe læti gratíque agnoſcimus, ſiquidem vitam, quæ æterna ſit, omnes manere planè definitéque docuit, et quaſi teſtem rei ipſius atque exemplum è mortuis JESUM CHRISTUM ſuſcitavit.

PRIUSQUAM hancce diſputationem ad umbilicum perducam, paucula ſunt dicenda de iis, qui opem Revelationis hodiè abjiciunt, rémque totam in Rationis vi poſitam eſſe temerè affirmant. Profectò eâdem, quâ veteres Philoſophi, caligine, animi eorum ſunt merſi; aut, ſi quid melius ſapiunt, id omne à Chriſtianâ Religione malâ fide mutuati ſunt. Eadem eſt in utriſque de religionis ac morum principiis inconſtantia, eadem ſententiarum inter ſe repugnantium diſcordia, eædem in re graviſſimâ nugæ atque ineptiæ. Quorsùm dogmata hæc novorum Philoſophorum tendant, ſi quis ſcire velit, oculos, oro, is conjiciat ad Europam ſanguine et cæde

redundantem*; reputet ſecum civilis ſocietatis fœdera diſrupta; jura privata æquè ac publica conculcata; leges tori jugalis irriſas; contemptui habita ſacroſancta omnia; reverentiam denique Dei et vitæ ſpem futuræ, aut Metaphyſicis oppugnata captiunculis, aut ſcurrili dicacitate temerè atque arroganter petita.

Qui ſe θεοφιλανθρώπους appellant, quid verum atque utile ſit, honeſtè præ cæteris et anxiè curare et inquirere profitentur. Libellum igitur ediderunt omnia ferè dogmata continentem, quæ Naturalis Religio ſibi vindicat, nonnulla etiam, quæ tradit Revelata. Quin eò ſive temeritatis ſive ſuperbiæ progreſſi

* De cauſis tumultuum Gallicorum, bellíque luctuoſi, quod indè exarſit, multis et penè inanditis vitiis, neutiquam me decet aliquod πολιτικὸν σχίμμα proferre. Viro tamen Chriſtiano integrum eſt illud dicere, tam immania flagitia aut non exſtitiſſe, aut ſaltem calamitatibus tot tantíſque ortum non dediſſe, ſi in gente illâ Religio Revelata, vel pleniùs accuratiúſque eſſet intellecta, vel uſu diligentiore à Philoſophis et Theologis exculta. Impensè verò lætor, quòd miſeriarum harum graviſſimarum, et fœdiſſimorum errorum ſentina tandem aliquando exhauſta eſſe videatur. Dulce nomen Pacis eſt, et res ipſa, cùm ad vitas fortunáſque civium tuendas, tùm ad religionem et virtutem conſervandam valdè ſalutaris. Patria autem noſtra, cùm et famis et belli periculis nuperrimè defuncta ſit, fas eſto Deum precari, ut perennia ac propria nobis poſteríſque noſtris munera hæc ipſius faxit.

ΤΑΝΑΕ, ΠΑΤΕΡ ΤΡΙΑΛΙΣΤΕ, ΣΑΩ ΠΟΛΙΝ, 'ΕΝ Θ' 'ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑι, 'ΕΝ Τ' 'ΕΥΗΠΕΛΙΑι· ΦΕΡΕ Δ' 'ΑΓΡΟΘΙ ΝΟΣΤΙΜΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ. ΦΕΡΒΕ ΒΟΑΣ, ΦΕΡΕ ΜΑΛΑ· ΦΕΡΕ ΣΤΑΧΥΝ, 'ΟΙΣΕ ΘΕΡΙΣΜΟΝ. ΦΕΡΒΕ ΚΑΙ 'ΕΙΡΑΝΑΝ, 'ΙΝ', 'ΟΞ 'ΑΡΟΣΕ, ΤΗΝΟΣ 'ΑΜΑΣΕΙ. Vid. Callim. Hymn. in Cererem.

progreſſi ſunt, ut, quod antiqui Philoſophi aſſequi nequiverint, id ſe ſuo ingenio ornatè cumulatéque perfeciſſe jactitent. At verò vel incerta, vel falſa, eſſe pleraque omnia, quæ vel docendi causâ vel gloriandi dixerint, quævis ferè pagina ἐγχειριδίου illius decantati manifeſtiſſimis exemplis evicerit. Equidem confidentiſſimè affirmaverim, quicquid paulò ſanius inter fautores hoſce humanæ rationis repertum ſit, è ſacrarum ſcripturarum aut præceptis aut verbis eſſe deſumptum. Quâ in re fraudis an erroris plus ſit, alii viderint. Me certè judice, nihil propriæ ac ſuæ laudis Revelatio Divina per Θεοφιλανθρώπους iſtos amiſerit, nihil novæ atque inauditæ victoriæ Ratio humana reportaverit.

Quæ cùm ita ſint, grates oportet vel maximas agamus Deo, qui mentibus noſtris, quod unum defuerat, largè ſupeditaverit. Abſit verò illud, ut qui Revelationis vel auctoritatem defenderit, vel ſanctitatem utilitatémque explicaverit, idcircò Rationem aliquâ contumeliâ velle afficere exiſtimetur. Eſſe eam ipſam à Deo profectam, lubentiſſimè confiteor.—Quibuſcunque viribus ſit prædita, quibuſcunque uſibus inſerviat, neceſſe eſt nunquam non recordemur, Rationem quaſi lumen quoddam vitæ homi-

hominibus eſſe à Deo conceſſam. Ea merito ac jure in ſecundis conſiſtere debebit, licet Religioni dentur Primæ. Quòd autem ſequi hanc ducem et eidem tanquam famulari Rationem decet, eſt illud quidem non modò in ſanctiſſimi muneris, verùm etiam pulcerrimi ampliſſimíque beneficii, loco ponendum.

Revelata Religio hoc, an illo, tempore è cœlo deſcenderit, quid tandem intereſt? Quin illud potiùs meminerimus, ſolidam atque expreſſam veritatis imaginem idcircò poſſe in diſciplinâ Chriſtianâ reperiri, quòd doctrinarum optimarum ſcientiam auxerit et provexerit; quòd Deum nobis unum ad colendum propoſuerit; quòd cultum ejus ſanum purúmque ſaluberrimis præceptis inſtituerit; quòd cognitionem vitæ futuræ plenam et perfectam nobis patefecerit; quòd denique in luce vel clariſſimâ res multas collocaverit, quæ ſummâ ſolertiâ ſummáque diligentiâ Veterum Philoſophorum fruſtrà eſſent inveſtigatæ *. Rationis autem patronos

* De materie hujus diſputationis ita me amiciſſimè monuit Parrius. "Totam hancce de uſibus, quibus Revelatio inſervierit, quæſtionem fusè et dilucidè tractavit Joannes Ellis, D.D. Sanctæ Catharinæ, Dublinii, olim Vicarius. Primi Voluminis editio ſecunda, Londini vulgata eſt, A.D. 1771, ſub titulo; 'The knowledge of Divine things from Revelation, not from Reaſon or Nature.' Profectò liber iſte multa habet nova; multa, me ſaltèm judice, ad contemplandum ſalutaria;

tronos etiam atque etiam monitos velim, ut animum ſuum attentum et penitùs infixum habeant in graviſſima hæc Baconi verba. "Cauſa verò et radix ferè omnium malorum in ſcientiis ea una eſt, quòd, dum mentis humanæ vires falsò miramur et extollimus, vera ejus auxilia non quæramus *."

ſalutaria; nonnulla etiam, in quibus Elliſius (ut homo erat acri et fervido ingenio) mihi videtur ὑπὲρ τὰ ἰσχαμμένα πηδᾶν. Operi ſuo coronidem impoſuerit, nécne, ignoro. Fando autem accepi mortem ſcriptoris impedimento fuiſſe, quò minùs ſecundum Volumen in lucem emitteretur."

* Novum Organum, &c. Aphoriſm. ix.

CONCIO AD CLERUM.

JUDIC. CAP. xi. COMM. 39.

Expletiſque duobus menſibus, reverſa eſt ad patrem ſuum: et fecit ei ſicut voverat, quæ ignorabat virum.

RES ferè nulla eſt, quæ Revelatam Religionem graviore damno affecerit, quàm prava Sacroſanctæ Scripturæ interpretatio. Ex hâc exortæ ſunt Hæreſes illæ, quæ Eccleſiæ ſtatum concordem ac pacificum tumultuoſis diſſidiis interpellaverint. Hæc venerando nomini Religionis maculas identidèm aſperſit, adverſariis ejus injuriæ ei inferendæ occaſionem avidè captantibus, neque amicis, quantâ vel fide vel diligentiâ oportebat, impetus eorum reprimentibus. Is verò error longè eſt deterrimus, quem aut annorum ſeries penè ſanxiſſe videatur, aut in quem pateat viros, pietate aut doctrinâ inſignes, eſſe prolapſos. Quò autem diutiùs inoleverit ex pravâ aliquâ

interpretatione vulnus, eò acriore opus eſt curâ in adhibendis ei remediis Neque magìs mihi videtur Religioni prodeſſe poſſe verus ejuſdem fautor ac ſatelles, quàm ſi quis hujuſmodi labem per ſæcula jam complura infixam, et per injurioſas etiam amicorum manus fœdiorem factam, idoneâ explanatione deterſerit. Materiem itaque neque planè inutilem neque prorsùs injucundam videor ſumturus, ſi quæ de celebri illo Jephthæ voto in hunc uſquè diem à plurimis vel inſulsè, vel pravè, intellecta ſint, rectè interpretari aggrediar. Rem enim ab *Hiſtorico ſacro* narratam ita plerique acceperunt, ac ſi inſignis ille Iſraëlis Judex, ipſius Jehovæ ductu victoriam ab hoſtibus reportans, ex voto ritè concepto filiam unicam ad aras Dei trucidaverit. Quam quidem opinionem ita latè ſparſam videmus, ut Poëtæ * tragœdiarum materiem, et tabularum Pictores †, virginem hancce, tanquam alteram Iphigeniam, ſumere non dubitârint.

Ἀτὰρ

* Notiſſima eſt de hoc argumento Georgĭ Buchanani fabula.

† In libello, cui titulus, "Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors," multis ſolidiſque argumentis Brownius contendit, nec textui nec rationi convenire, ut credamus Jephthæ filiam eſſe immolatam. Vid. Lib. V. cap. 14. de picturâ Jephthæ filiam ſacrificantis.

Ἀτὰρ τί δὴ σόφισμα τῷδ' ἡγούμενοι
Ἐς τήνδε παῖδα ψῆφον ὥρισαν φόνου;
Πότερα τὸ χρῆν σφ' ἐπήγαγ' ἀνθρωποσφαγεῖν
Πρὸς τύμβον, ἔνθα βεθυτεῖν μᾶλλον πρέπει*;

Quocircà, ſuis ſibi, per me licet, vel commentis opinionum, vel artium ſuarum blanditiis iſti gaudeant, quibus nimirùm "*audendi quidlibet æqua ſemper fuit poteſtas.*" Qui autem Theologorum ſe nomine dignantur, ii tandem aliquando, velim, reſipiſcant: et facinus, tùm à divinâ legis Moſaicæ auctoritate, tùm etiam à ſummi Numinis laude penitùs abhorrens, à paginis ſacris amoveant†.

SED

* Eurip. Hec. v. 262.

† Non diſſimulandum eſt Hopfnerum, Iphigeniæ in Aulide editorem, alitèr de hâc quæſtione ſtatuiſſe. Vid. Diſſertationem de Euripid. Iphig. p. 68. Halæ. 1794. "Quàm facile," inquit, "latro, qualis Jephtha erat, tale votum ſuſcipere poterat! Nec anxiè philoſophandum, cur non enumeraverit ſibi anteà leges Moſaicas (Levit. xviii. 21. xx. 1. —5. Deut. xviii. 10.) è quibus tale ſacrificium illicitum erat, id quod in eo, quo nunc erat ſtatu, nullo modo facere poterat: in primis, cùm id temporis non religio Moſaïca, ſed gentilium regnaret."—Quod ad Moſis præcepta attinet dicit vir doctiſſimus; "Attamen hæc quoque, ſi Jephtha deliberâſſet, eum non potuiſſent movere, quia in l. c. de ſacrificiis humanis, idolis, Molocho, oblatis ſermo eſt."

Hopfneri hæc argumenta facilè dilui poſſunt. Primò ſcire velim, undè didicerit *merum* latronem fuiſſe Jephtham? Exſulem fateor eum et profugum fuiſſe, et ad tolerandam vitam expeditiones militares ſuſcepiſſe; undè Gilhaditæ adducti eſſent, ut eum ſibi ductorem præficerent. Prædas etiam agebat, unà cum ſociis ſuis, ſed non niſi juſtas, ab Ammonitis ſcilicet, (uti viris doctis placuit) aut Philiſtæis. Virum tamen ſapi-

SED priuſquàm de naturâ iſtius eventûs quæſtionem inſtituamus, illud quidem eſt anquirendum, utrùm verbis, ad Hebraicam veritatem accuratè informatis, eventus ipſe repræſentetur. Et hîc quidem dolendum eſt paulò infeliciùs actum eſſe cum Auctore Vulgatæ Verſionis, ſiquidem, unà cum τοῖς ὅ, verba, quibus Heros votum conceperit, malè reddiderit, maſculino genere, "quicumque," pro neutro, "quodcumque," uſus. Archetypi Hebraici ſenſum commodè expreſſit Targum Jonathanis, quâcum Anglica

entem ſe præbuit, pium erga Deum, et parentem filiæ ſuæ amantiſſimum; neque ullum exſtat teſtimonium, quo probari poſſit eum crudelem et injuſtum fuiſſe prædatorem. Secundò, conſtat ex ſacrâ Scripturâ religionem tum temporis non Gentilium, ſed Moſaicam, vim habuiſſe inter eos, qui Jephthæ parebant. Dato autem, legem Moſaicam aliquâ ex parte eſſe infirmatam, minimè ſequitur præcepta illa de hominibus immolandis graviſſima in deſuetudinem abiiſſe. Tertiò, quòd Deus ſacrificia humana Molocho immolata abominatus eſſet, illud ipſum argumento eſt, neutiquàm ea poſſe Deo placere. Optimè igitur Junius dicit; "Si ſacrificium Iſaaci, quod imperaverat, Deus recuſavit; quantò minùs votivum eſſet accepturus?" Cultorum profectò impietas in eo poſita eſt, non ſolùm quòd liberos, ſed quòd homines ſacrificarent. Per leges autem Moſaicas nulla eſt parentibus data poteſtas in vitam liberorum.

Sunt qui, cùm Jehovæ honori conſultum eſſe velint, neque tamen concedant Jephthæ filiam, ob votum quod pater ejus ſuſcepiſſet, non occiſam eſſe, opinentur "hanc fuiſſe corruptionem iſtius ætatis, in quâ Jephtha vixerit; et, mutato nomine, ſacrificium hoc fuiſſe Molocho, Deo Ammonitarum, contra quos jam pugnaturus eſſet." Vid. Poli Synopſin, Tom. I. p. 1150. Iſtiuſmodi conjecturæ quid valeant, alii viderint.

Anglica Verſio arctè conſentit. "Et erit, quod egredietur egrediens extrà à portis domûs meæ ad occurſum meum, quando revertar in pace à filiis Ghamon, et erit ante Dominum, et aſcendere faciam id holocauſtum." Illud quoque notandum, quòd in commate, à quo concionis hujuſce argumentum deſumitur, paulò obſcuriore uſus eſt verborum ſtructurâ Vulgatus Interpres; "et fecit ei ſicut voverat, *quæ* ignorabat virum." Paraphraſis Chaldaica iterùm accuratè, et cum Hebraico, et cum noſtrâ, atque etiam τοῖς ὁ amicè conſpirans, ita eum locum interpretatur; "fecit illi votum ſuum, quod vovit: et illa non cognovit virum *."

Et

* Parrius me per litteras monitum fecit, à meâ ſententiâ olim ſtetiſſe Thomam Randolphum; cujus auctoritas in hâc re ideò pluris æſtimanda ſit, quòd Theologiæ, ut aiunt, orthodoxæ ſtrenuus propugnator fuerit, et linguæ Hebraicæ eximiè peritus. Diſtinguit Randolphus inter חֵרֶם i. e. Cherem et נֵדֶר i. e. Neder, quorum utique votorum illud cum diris conjunctum eſſet, neque redimi poſſet; hoc diris omninò careret, et redimi poſſet, vel non redimi, pro arbitrio ejus qui voviſſet. De hâc diſtinctione inter Neder et Cherem conſulendi ſunt ſcriptores, quos Polus in Synopſi ſuâ laudavit ad locum. Illud intereà notandum eſt, vocem Cherem de Jephthæ voto *non* occurrere; ſed verbum Neder bis à Sacro Scriptore in hoc Capite eſſe uſurpatum. Alia etiam eſt conjectura Randolphi in Comm. 31mo, interpretando, Ellipſin eſſe putat תו lamed ante pronomen לוֹ, ita ut pronomen illud referatur ad nomen Jehovæ, quod paulò antè præceſſerat, et loci ſenſus ſic Anglicè reddatur: *And I will offer to him* (i. e. *to the Lord*) *a burnt offering*. Qui Hebraicè

ſciunt

Et hæc quidem æquè magni momenti, et pro indubiis habenda. Quæ ſequuntur, etiamſi conjecturâ potiſſimùm niti videntur, minimè tamen prætermittenda ſunt. Suſpicantur nonnulli eruditi viri in comm. 31. conjunctivam particulam ו pro disjunctivâ uſurpari, locúmque adeò verti debere; "conſecrabitur, *aut* immolabitur*:"—"*aut* erit ante Dominum, *aut* aſcendere faciam id holocauſtum". Et in ultimo hujus capitis commate, cùm Vulgatæ æquè ac vernaculæ noſtræ verſionis ſenſus ſit idem, nempè quòd, "poſt anni circulum conveniant in unum filiæ Iſraël, et *plangant* filiam Jephte Galaaditæ diebus quatuor;" hunc potiùs ſenſum alii volunt ipſum Archetypum poſtulare: "A diebus in dies ibunt filiæ Iſraël ad *alloquendum* filiam Jephte Galaaditæ

ſciunt, facilè conceſſerint multas iſtiuſmodi ellipſes in Sacris Scripturis reperiri. Vid. Genes. xxxvii. 4, 14. Joſh. xv. 19. 1 Sam. xxiv. 20. 1 Reg. xix. 21. Job. xv. 21. xxxi. 37. Pſalm. cxxxix. 20. Ezek. xxiv. 3.

Equidem (ſubjicit Parrius) conjecturam iſtam Randolphi de pronomine per ellipſin explicando, non modò ingenioſam, ſed veriſſimam puto. Vide Concionem ejus Anglicè ſcriptam, quæ Oxonii habita eſt, Jun. viii. A. D. 1766.

* Vatabl. et Grot. "Votum eſt conditionale, ſub diſjunctione: nam homines non ſacrificabantur Domino." Haud ſecùs interpretatur locum Tremellius. "Erit inquam Jehovæ, aut offeram illud holocauſtum." Huic ſententiæ videtur omninò ſuffragari, vir pius et doctus, Brownius in libello ſuprà citato.

laaditæ quatuor diebus in anno:" ſeu, ut uno dicam verbo, contendunt argumentis planè validis, τὸ לתנות potiùs ſignificare "ad alloquendum," vel etiam "confabulandum," quam "ad lamentandum *."

Sed omiſſis Grammaticorum argutiis et amoto quicquid eſt præjudicatæ opinionis, ſi quæramus, quid hæc ſibi velit hiſtoria, neutiquàm mihi arduum aut difficile videtur id, quod verum ſit, aſſequi. Paucis †, ut

* לתנות. Verbum תנ״ה hic reddunt οἱ ὁ per θρηνεῖν, et Vulg. per "plangant." Alii volunt ſenſum ejus in hoc loco eſſe, "ad confabulandum." Proculdubio in cap. v. comm. 11. verbum iſtud occurrit in ſenſu "confabulandi," et in aliis locis ſignificat, "certâ conditione vel mercede conducere." Vid. Taylori Concordant.

"Extat in Pihel bis, Jud. v. 11. et xi. 40. In priori alloquium denotat manifeſtò. Ideò ut in poſteriori ita ſumamus, quia *res quoque id fert*, cùm filia Jephthæ non fuerit occiſa." Guſſetius in v. Eadem eſt Randolphi opinio. Vide concionem ejus ſuprà laudatam, p. 31. Vide etiam Clericum ad loc. et Poli Synops.

† Schulzius, in Volumine 2do. Scholior. in Vetus Teſtamentum, ad Judic. xi. 30—39. ita ſcribit. "Jephtha *Jovæ reverens* heros erat. cf. omninò v. 9. 11, 21, 23, 24, 28, 35. et Ebr. xi. 32. *Prudenter* etiam bonam ſuam Iſraelitarúmque cauſam Ammonitarum regi probare ſtuduerat v. 12—27. Matre verò meretrice natus patríſque domo expulſus ac prædonum dux factus legis Moſaicæ notitiam (accuratam certè) animo ſuo informare non potuit, et omninò Jephthæ miram legis Moſaicæ inſcitiam ſequentia manifeſtè arguunt. (1.) In nuncupando voto ſe victimam Deo oblaturum promittit, quodcumque ipſi, reduci ab hoſte victori, primum obvium futurum eſſet, cùm tamen per legem Moſaicam hominem immolare nefas eſſet, nec quodvis animal Deo rectè immolari poſſet. (2.) Votum impru-

ut opinor, dubium esse potest, quin Heros, vir Hebræus, Dei et patriæ hostes aggressurus, votum

imprudenter et contra legis Mosaicæ interdictum disertum adcommodatéque ad Cananæam superstitionem factum irrevocabile existimat. (3.) ipse loco alieno procul à Siluntis tabernaculo virginem filiam Deo victimam offert, cf. v. 31, 35. et 39."

Quod ad primum Schulzii argumentum attinet, Jephthæ verba non sunt absolutè intelligenda. Vovit, procul dubio, se oblaturum esse, quicquid ipsi primùm occurrisset. Vix autem credibile est, in tanto rerum suarum discrimine potuisse ei in mentem venire de rebus, quas lex offerri vetuisset. Mihi semper illud, quod Clerico placuit, magis probabile visum est; "Jephthæ fuisse greges pecudum, seu boum, caprarúmve, aut ovium, quæ sola animalia mactari possent, et quæ circa eam viam, quâ domum rediturus esset, errare solerent: quorum vel gregem integrum mactaturus esset, in holocaustum Jehovæ, si modò voti damnaretur." Vid. Clerici notam in v. 30. 2do. Votum à se factum irrevocabile Jephtham existimavisse, non est cur miremur: neque ulla est caussa ad Cananæam superstitionem confugiendi. Per Legem enim Mosaicam, quam in ipso voto Jehovæ faciendo Jephtha se aliquâ ex parte et scire et venerari comprobavit, vel persolvi, vel, si res tulisset, redimi debebant omnia omninò vota. Quòd Schulzius affirmet, "votum Jephthæ contra legis Mosaicæ interdictum disertum fecisse," à petitione (ut dialectici aiunt) principii pendet. Occiderítne is filiam suam, nécne, illa ipsa res est, quâ de agitur.—Neque filiæ, neque ullius victimæ humanæ in voto fecit mentionem. Dato autem eam re verâ non occisam esse, cadant necesse est omnia, quæ à Schulzio dicta sunt, de inscitiâ legis Mosaicæ, quâ Jephthæ mens occæcata fuerit. 3°. Quare in loco, qui *alienus* appellatur, voto suo Jephtha satisfecerit, caussam ipse Schulzius (ad comm. 39) satis idoneam affert. "Jephtha, cui hominum victimas haud infrequentes esse ex consuetudine cum gentibus Cananæis constare poterat, non ad Siluntis tabernaculum, *quod in Ephraimitarum inimicè sentientium* (cf. cap. 12.) *terrâ ac potestate erat*, sed loco alieno nec legitimo victimam Deo obtulisse censendus est."

Hæc si ita essent, etiamsi animalia, quæ offerri licitum esset, Jephtha se oblaturum esse vovisset, ea non potuisset quin immolaret in loco alieno; (ídque necessitati, non ignorantiæ, tribuen-

votum conceperit, eo more perficiendum, quo Moſis inſtituta præciperent. Vovit nimirùm Domino quicquid primùm redeunti Victori è domo ſuâ vel è ſtabulis* occurriſſet, illud ὁλοκαυτῶσαι †. Neque id minùs certum videtur, non ei veniſſe in mentem id, quod primùm obvium fieret, ejuſmodi futurum eſſe ut in ſacrificio mactari non poſſet; qualia erant immunda omnia animalia, quæ Lex offerri vetaret ‡. Occurrit primùm redeunti filia, ejuſmodi ſcilicet, ut lege non poſſet mactari. Quid ergo? Devoverat Domino quicquid primùm occurriſſet; volens nimirùm ὁλοκαυτῶσαι, ſi ad ſacrifi-

tribuendum fuiſſet. Quòd ſi nulla omninò Victima eſt immolata ſed Jephthæ filia virginitati et Dei miniſteriis devota fuit, objectionis, quæ à loco alieno petita eſt, vis omnis evaneſcit.— Profectò, Moſaicorum præceptorum ſcientia, quanta Jephthæ fuerit, non is ſum, qui definire auſim. Inſcitiam verò ejus tantam fuiſſe, ut in Jehovæ honorem filiam ſuam ſacrificaret, cùm Davidis et Prophetarum omnium de tali facinore ſilentium, tùm Apoſtoli eum collaudantis verba, mox proferenda, credere me non ſinunt.

* Vid Cler. ad. ver. 31.

† עולה uti hîc ſcriptum eſt, vel עלה, quod reperitur Genes. viii. 20. Exod. xxxiii. 6. et alibi, deſcendit à radice, עלה, aſcendere. Holocauſti quippè flamma et fumus ad cœlum aſcendebant. Vide Parkhurſt. Lexicon in voce. Taylor. Concordant. pag. 1366. et Biel in v. ὁλοκαύτωμα.

‡ Quid? ſi aſinus aut canis occurriſſet, debuítne holocauſtum fieri? Non ſanè. Ergo nec humani generis quicquam. Grot.

ſacrificium fuiſſet aptum; ſin minùs, filiam ipſam voluit devotam eſſe Domino, quâcunque demùm viâ poſſet devoveri. Quânam autem viâ fieri poteſt, ut Virgo devota ſit, atque maneret, Deo? Servando nimirùm Virginitatem, et ſacra Miniſteria Dei obeundo. Idque affatìm, ut mihi videtur, aſſerunt Hiſtorici ſacri verba; niſi qui, præconceptis opinionibus omninò occæcati, viâ malint vetere et difficiliore vagari, quàm in novam ſe dare et omninò tutam. "Fecit illi votum ſuum, quod vovit: et illa non cognovit virum." Devovit eam pater, quantùm potuit devovere. *Illa* in perpetuum manſit Virgo. Nullâ lege, humanâ aut divinâ, filiam pater trucidare potuit; cùm autem re verâ, ut putabat, Domino eam devoviſſet, ſolo quo potuit modo conſecravit, Virginem miniſtram Numini dicando.

Hunc mihi ſenſum videntur facilè præbere Sacri Hiſtorici verba. Et niſi ſiniſtrè quodammodò à veteribus fuiſſent accepta, verbulum unum addere, ut in re manifeſtâ, ſupervacaneum foret. Cùm autem Interpretum permulti iſtum eventum alio prorsùs induerint colore, paulò fuſiùs neceſſe eſt interpretationem hancce noſtram ſtabiliamus, et ab adverſariorum, ſive argumentis,

gumentis, ſive captiunculis, pro virili vindicemus.

Caussæ, quam defendendam ſuſcepi, tria potiſſimùm objiciuntur reſponſa, quæ cùm redarguero, ſpero fore, ut ſententia à me modò allata, tùm Scriptoris genuino ſenſui, tùm ſacroſanctæ Scripturæ ipſius laudi videatur conſentanea.

In primis igitur contenditur, non fuiſſe nefas per inſtituta Moſis devovere et morte afficere humanam Victimam ;—negant quinetiam moris fuiſſe apud Hebræos in Dei miniſterium Virgines dicare ;—deindè ignorare ſe omninò profitentur, ſi Jephthæ filia tantummodò eſſet virgo manſura, quænam foret tanti, et ſibi et patri ipſius, cauſſa ejulatûs.

I. Contendunt, inquam, nonnulli interpretes, conceſſum fuiſſe à lege Moſaicâ humanam victimam litare : eíque opinioni fidem, per locum quendam in libro Levitici, adſtruere conantur. Locus ille qui continetur commaſin 28vo. et 29mo. capitis ultimi, ſic ſe in Vulgatâ Verſione habet. " Omne, quod Domino conſecratur, ſive homo fuerit, ſive animal, ſive ager, non vendetur, nec redimi poterit. Quicquid ſemel fuerit conſecratum, ſanctum ſanctorum erit Domino.

Et omnis conſecratio, quæ offertur ab homine, non redimetur, ſed morte morietur."

Cum inſignis iſte locus ad totum argumentum è nodis expediendum valdè proſit, accuratâ eum trutinâ oportet ponderemus. Itaque ſi interpretum ſententias quæramus, Ludovicus quidem Cappellus, qui adverſariorum ἐνὶ προμάχοις propugnat, reddere eum non dubitat; "omne interdictum, quod devotum fuerit ex humanis perſonis;" et exindè colligit, Iſraëlitis fas fuiſſe, quemcumque mortalium, ſive Iſraëlita eſſet, ſive peregrinus, morti conſecratione addicere. Et, ut verum fatear, ſenſum vix alium verbis tribuunt Clericus et Roſenmüllerus; quamvis legem hancce Moſaicam putant pertinere tantummodò ad hoſtes Reip. Judaicæ, qui in bello internecioni fuiſſent devoti.—Liceat autem mihi in medium proferre hominis verba in orientalibus litteris verſatiſſimi, τῦ μακαρίτε Joännis Uri; qui, cùm ab eo, Oxonii degente, quid de loco hoc perobſcuro ipſe ſenſerit, per amicum olim ſciſcitarer, hanc ad me verſionem benigniſſimè miſit. 'Hæc eſt,' inquiebat vir doctiſſimus, 'de duobus iſtis verſibus mea ſententia.' "Ac nulla res devota, quam devoverit aliquis Jehovæ, ex omnibus quæ *ſunt* ei

inter

inter homines, ſive beſtia *ſit*, ſive pars *ſit* agri poſſeſſionis ejus, vendatur aut redimatur: omnis res devota ſanctitas ſanctitatum eſt Jehovæ. Nulla beſtia devota, quæ devovebitur ab homine, redimatur: omninò morte afficiatur." Et cur comma poſterius ita verterit, rationem hanc adjecit, " Vox חרם ſignificat in genere *res devota*, in ſpecie, *beſtia devota:* et hæc ſignificatio determinatur per *morte afficiatur* *." Hujus itaque

* Lubet hîc totum illud exſcribere, quod de re tam gravi mecum communicavit vir eruditiſſimus.

"LEVIT. xxvii. 28.

VERSIO.

Ac nulla res devota, quam devoverit aliquis Jehovæ, ex omnibus quæ *ſunt* ei inter homines, ſive beſtia *ſit*, ſive pars *ſit* agri poſſeſſionis ejus, vendatur aut redimatur: omnis res devota ſanctitas ſanctitatum eſt Jehovæ.

NOTA 1.

Vox כל, quia ſequitur particula negativa לא, cum quâ conſtruitur, exprimi debet per *nulla*.

NOTA 2.

1 Sam. xv. 33. Orbabitur מנשים inter mulieres mater tua. Ut præfixum מ in מנשים ſignificat *inter*, ita מ in מאדם exprimit *inter*; et vox ipſa אדם notat non tantùm *hominem*, ſed et *homines*.

NOTA 3.

Levit. v. 9. Et aſperget מדם partem ſanguinis—ſuper parietem. Ut præfixum מ in מדם ſignificat *partem*; non enim omnis ſanguis aſpergendus erat ſuper parietem: ita מ in משדה *partem* notat; nemo enim omnes agros ſuos devovit. Littera ו, vocibus משדה et בהמה præfixâ, disjunctiva eſt.

VERSIO

quc tàm eruditi viri opinionem, graviſſimis argumentis ſtabilitam, cujuſvis alius Interpretis

VERSIO 29.

Nulla beſtia devota, quæ devovebitur ab homine, redimatur: omninò morte afficiatur.

NOTA.

כל, ut ſuprà, quia cum לא conſtruitur, exprimi debet per *nulla*. Vox חרם ſignificat in genere *res devota*, in ſpecie *beſtia devota*: et hæc ſignificatio determinatur per *morte afficiatur*."

Quæ Celeb. Uri de מן, ſenſu τῦ *inter*, et de אדם ſignificante *homines* perindè atque *hominem*, ejuſmodi ſunt, ut interpretatione aliquâ et exemplis illuſtrari debeant.

Particulam מן "idem valere, quod מן, undè originem duxerit," benè nos monet Schroederus in Inſtitutionibus ſuis ad fundamenta linguæ Hebrææ. p. 188. Sect. de Particulis. Videamus jam loca nonnulla, in quibus τὸ מן vim habet τῦ *inter*, vel *de* vel *ex*, ita ut *partem* rei alicujus ſignificet. Exod. xii. 5. *ex* agnis et *ex* capris accipietis. Num. xxxi. 30. unum apprehenſum *è* quinquaginta, *ex* homine, *ex* bove. Joſ. iv. 2. capite vobis *è* populo. Ruth ii. 14. comedes *de* pane. Paralip. I. ix. 3. habitaverunt *de* filiis Jehudah. Jerem. xxxix. 10. *de* plebe tenues. Vid. Calaſio. Concordant. in v. מן Tom. II. In Dan. i. 19. *vim* habet τῦ *inter*. et non inventus eſt מכלם *inter* omnes, etſi legitur in τοῖς ὁ, *ex omnibus*, et in vulgat. de univerſis. A מן profluit מנה pars, מנים plur. vices. numeri.—Vid. Lexicon Hebr. et Chald. Paſſionei. p. 423. Tom. II. et Calaſio. in voce. Tom. II. p. 1172.

אדם ſæpè *unumquemque* et *homines* ſignificat. Ezr. xxxiv. 31. Job. xxxiv. 26. ſuper *unumquemque*—Hæ voces, inquit Paſſionei, בני אדם, *mortales* ubique ſignificant, ſicut Pſalm. viii. 5. Vide Paſſion. in voc. אדם. Tom. II. p. 9.

אדם aliquando ſumitur *pro homine in univerſali*, ſeu, pro *humanâ naturâ* בני אדם *filii hominis*, univerſum genus humanum. Calaſio. Tom. I. p. 47. in voce. *filios hominis*, in Pſalm. xxxiii. 13.—opera *hominum*. Pſalm. xvii. 4 omnes *homines* viderunt illud, in Job. xxxvii. 7.

Mirum eſt, quantum Hebræi ſcriptores ſibi in Syntaxi indulſerint. "Nomina collectiva," (inquit Schroederus) "hoc eſt,

pretis anteferre non dubitârim. Verùm enimvero, ne opinioni cujuſquam, utcunque ſit doctus, nimiùm auctoritatis tribuere videamur, libet potiùs, id quod in omni difficili quæſtione fieri debet, ex ipſius loci contextu, et ex univerſo legum tenore, uter potiſſimùm interpres ſententiam tulerit magìs cum utroque congruentem, dijudicare.

TOTUM illud Levitici caput verſatur in præſcribendo, quænam ex iis, quæ Deo devoveantur, redimi, et quo pacto, debeant; quæ è contrario, nullo modo aut pretio, ex voti

eſt, quæ in ſingulari numero aliquam hominum, animalium, aut rerum multitudinem ſignificant, non tantùm ut ſingularia, ratione formæ ſuæ, ſed et ut pluralia ratione ſignificationis, conſtrui poſſunt; ut, *populus inventi* cum eo." Sam. I. xiii. 15. Et *ibunt vir.* i. e. quiſque vel ſinguli. Jud. ix. 55. Schroeder. de Syntaxi Nom. ſect. 1. Reg. 26.

Angli hanc poſteriorem conſtructionem non imitamur. Sæpè tamen verbum, *man*, æquè ac *men*, omne genus humanum ſignificat. Neque aliter ſcriptores Latini.

> Pennis non *homini* datis. HORAT. Lib. I. Od. 3.
> —Nunquam *homini* ſatis
> Cautum eſt in horas. Ibid. Lib. II. Od. 13.

Atque hinc forſan intelligendus eſt locus iſte perobſcurus:

> Scit genius, natale comes qui temperat aſtrum,
> Naturæ Deus humanæ, *mortalis* in unumquodque caput, vultu mutabilis, albus et ater.
> Ib. Epiſt. II. ii. 187.

Virum quendam apprimè doctum novi, qui cùm ipſum Genium hîc dici mortalem denegaret, *mortalis*, vice mortalium, poni cenſuerit, ita tamen ut in alium, qui huic ſimilis eſſet, vocis iſtius uſum, (ſcil. ſingular. loco plural.) ſe non incidiſſe fateretur.

voti obligatione queant liberari. Res profectò illæ, in quibus devotio fieri potuit, erant homines, domus, agri, animalia; dein ex his, alia quidem munda, alia verò immunda. Pretium, quo homines cujuſvis ætatis redimi poterant, diſertè aſſignatur: ita ut unicuique, qui quamcunque ob cauſam humanam perſonam devoviſſet, patuerit planè via, per quam perſona illa devota ex voti neceſſitate foret abſoluta. Si quis itidem Jehovæ ædes, agros, aut immunda animalia (quæ, ut lex ipſa declarat, omninò nefas eſſet immolare) votis conceptis ritè addixiſſet, pretium rebus aut animalibus ita devotis inrogare, lege jubebatur ſacerdos. Is igitur, qui eorum aliquid ita conſecrâſſet, ſi poſteà redimere voluiſſet, copia ei propoſiti exſequendi facta eſt; modò pretium ritè perſolveret, et quintam ejuſdem partem inſuper impenderet. Sin autem immundi alicujus animalis Dominus redimere illud nollet, tum omninò id vendi oportere lex ſtatuebat; eo, ut videtur, conſilio, ne qua dubitatio oriretur, de victimâ, in tali rerum ſtatu, immolandâ. Id enim, beſtia ſi immunda eſſet, ne per ullam unquam recti ſpeciem fieret, abundanter et apertè in lege cautum fuit. Quin immò, ſi poſſeſſor agri, qui poſt annum Jubilei fuiſſet devotus, aut

pretio

pretio à ſacerdote æſtimato redimere illum noluiſſet, aut alii cuivis mancipâſſet, tum denique lege præſcriptum eſt nunquam ei ceſſurum fore agrum ita devotum, poſtquàm dies Jubilei veniſſet; ſed Sacerdotibus in perpetuum iri aſſignatum. Occaſione eum redimendi ſemel omiſsâ, talis ager nullâ viâ aut ratione poſteà redimi potuit. De mundis etiam animalibus expliçatè et definitè conſtitutum eſt, nullum ob ea accipi debere aut pretium aut permutationem: quin omninò immolentur. Hic planè eſt commatum præcedentium ſenſus: dein ſequuntur, quæ modò citavimus.

His autem diligenter perpenſis, quis eſt, qui non ſtatim agnoſcat, neutiquàm hîc agi de perſonis humanis, aut de immundis animalibus, quorum utraque omninò redimere eſſet neceſſe, quorúmque adeò redimendorum ratio eſſet definita: ſed tantummodò de agro, quem redimere eſſet vetitum, et de mundis animalibus, quæ nullum unquam pretium tantùm valuerit, ut ab occiſione vindicaret? Repeti hîc videmus eadem præcepta, quæ de rebus planè iiſdem paulò antè fuerant Iſraëlitis data. Repetuntur autem more, omnibus legum latoribus, in primis Moſi, tùm uſitato, tùm neceſſario.

Cum hâc expoſitione congruit omninò viri eruditiſſimi ſententia. Quòd ſi cum pleriſque Interpretum locum vertas, non ſolùm pugnabunt ſequentia cum præcedentibus, quæ nunc amicè cohærent; ſed in meras ineptias ibitur, ac nugas deridendas. Si enim cum adverſariis locum accipiamus, pari, opinor, ratione contendere licebit, poſſe agrum atque hominem occiſione occidi. Jure itaque unus Interpretum quærit, "Quomodò hoc "fit, cùm ager atque homo inter conſecrata "numerentur*?" Lyra etiam verbis, magìs profectò ob vim, quàm ob elegantiam laudandis, benè animadvertit. "Dicitur, *Om-*"*nis conſecratio morietur*, &c. et tamen ager "ibi dicitur Deo conſecrari, qui tamen non "eſt ſuſceptivus mortis; dicebatur tamen "mortificari, quia tranſibat ad jus Sacerdo-"tum vel Templi; ſicut bona Eccleſiæ di-"cuntur amortizata†."

VERUM

* Vid. Poli Synops. ad Levit. xxvii. 29.

† Non poſſum mihi perſuadere, quin proferam vexatiſſimi hujuſce loci verſionem, à Theologis Anglicis factam, qui Genevam, regnante illâ furioſæ ſuperſtitionis fautrice, Mariâ, ſe receperant. Notwithſtanding nothing *ſeparate from the common uſe* that a man *doth ſeparate* unto the Lord—for every thing *ſeparate from the common uſe* is moſt holy unto the Lord. Nothing *ſeparate from common uſe*, which ſhall *be ſeparate* from man, ſhall be redeemed. Neque inficiandum eſt, quin hujuſce modi verſio à primigeniâ vocis חרם ſignificatione propiùs abſit. Vide Parkhurſt in voce; et Taylori Concordant.

Verum ſi, argumenti gratiâ, concedamus ſenſum hujuſce loci ita obſcurum eſſe, ut, quid ſibi velit, certò definiri non poſſit; tamen, quò ſecum lex divina congruat, reſtat, ut vim ejus ex tenore univerſorum Moſis inſtitutorum interpretemur, et ex iis præcipuè, quæ ad rem ſimilem, vel prorsùs eandem, referantur. — Tenor itaque legis Moſaicæ eſt mitis, clemens, humanus; ejuſmodi ſcilicet, ut ſi conferatur, vel cum ſapientiſſimis Ethnicorum inſtitutis, vel nonnullis, quæ hodiè etiam apud Chriſtianos valent, nimiis eam laudibus efferre nequeas. Propoſitum eſt porrò hujuſce legis vel in primis, ut ab erroribus, et vitiis, et feritate, quæ Idololatras tùm in civilibus, tùm etiam in ſacris rebus dedecorarent, integrum atque intactum populum Iſraëliticum ſervaret. Jam verò inter eas alienigenarum conſuetudines, quibus Dominus per Moſen pœnas minitatur, et à quibus ut diligenter abhorreat, genti ſuæ ſemel atque iterùm ac ſæpiùs imperat, tanquam inſigne quoddam ſcelus et immane, exſtat humanarum victimarum, præcipuè verò liberorum, manu parentûm interfectorum, Immolatio. Ecquid, tandem, illo perpetuo interdicto, quod in Deuteronomio legitur, vel ad explicandam Dei

voluntatem uberius, vel ad ſtabiliendam illam gravius excogitari poteſt? "Quando "diſperdiderit Dominus Deus tuus ante "faciem tuam gentes, ad quas ingredieris; "poſſidendas, et poſſederis eas, atque habita- "veris in terrâ earum: Cave ne imiteris eas, "poſtquàm te fuerint introeunte ſubverſæ, et "requiras cæremonias earum, dicens: ſicut "coluerunt gentes iſtæ Deos ſuos, ita et "ego colam. Non facies ſimiliter Domino "Deo tuo. Omnes enim abominationes, "quas averſatur Dominus, fecerunt Diis "ſuis, offerentes filios et filias et combu- "rentes igni. Quod præcipio tibi, hoc tan- "tùm facito Domino: nec addas quicquam, "nec minuas *."

PLENIUS certè aut clariùs declarare non potuit Jehova, ſeſe nolle eodem modo atque iiſdem ritibus coli, ac Gentium Dii colerentur. Eam tamen ob cauſſam Deus videtur ritus illos præcipuè abominandos ipſo de cœlo pronunciare, quòd ſanguine humano homines præpoſteri ipſas etiam aras inquinarent †. Flagitium planè majus admittere in ſe non potuerunt impii cultores, quàm ſi,

* Cap. xii. 29, &c.

† 2 Paralip. xxvii. 3. Pſalm. cvi. 37, 38. Iſai. lvii. 5. Jerem. vii. 31. xix. 5.

ſi, quo tempore Deum maximè vellent ſibi propitium fieri, eo tempore ipſi in alios homines maximè iniquos et crudeles ſe præſtarent. Pluribus hoc argumentum onerare teſtimoniis eſſet ſupervacaneum: tantùm id dicam, omnia omninò legis præcepta, omnes Prophetarum admonitiones, univerſum denique ſacroſanctæ ſcripturæ tenorem, cum verbis modò citatis prorsùs convenire. Igitur, quò minùs Cappelli rectè ſeſe habeat interpretatio, vetat totius legis, à Moſe prolatæ, ratio. Si igitur nullum omninò foret inter Interpretes diſſidium, accuratæ critices norma prohiberet, ne id de parte acciperemus, quòd totum peſſundaret.

PRÆTEREA, ſi iſta, quæ Cappello placuit, legis ſententia eſſet, et ſi ita eam intelligerent Hebræi, annon credibile eſt, nonnulla poſſe ſubindè reperiri talis voti veſtigia? Humanas victimas litare ſi lege permiſſum eſſet, id certè erit conceſſum, maximè eos fore de Numine merituros, qui talia, utpote quæ maximo pretio conſtarent, ſacrificia adhiberent. Nullóne patriæ diſcrimine, nullis rerum anguſtiis, conventum eſſet inter populi principes, Deo ut offerrent, quod omnium ſacrificiorum, aut ad iram ejus avertendam aut favorem conciliandum eſſet efficaciſſimum?

mum? Id enim apud Gentes alias fæpiſſimè factum novimus *. Munus ſcilicet iſti putabant Diis acceptiſſimum, et ad pœnam à ſe depellendam maximè accommodatum, ſanguinem humanum. Atqui nullum iſtiuſmodi κάθαρμα, ab Iſraëlitis oblatum, tradidit Hiſtoria: neque voti unquam ullius, quod iſtiuſmodi eſſet, Sacri Annales meminerunt. An verò iſtûc ſive ineptiarum ſive impietatis confugient adverſarii, ut affirmare non dubitârint, quæ Deus clementiſſimus propalàm fanciverit vota, ea ipſa ob fævitiam atque immanitatem ſuſcipere in ſe homines formidaviſſe? Si igitur nullum iſtiuſmodi voti reperitur exemplum, ſi nulla iſtiuſmodi ſacrificia ſunt non modò facta, ſed ne probata quidem à Judæis, imò ſi in talia (modò fas ſit dicere) ſacra pœnas ubique et exitium vox divina minitatur, non crediderim Jephtham, in quem immiſſus ſit ſpiritus Domini, et qui ab Apoſtolo honorificè nominetur, ad ſcelus eſſe aggreſſum, quod à Naturâ humanâ

* Vid. teſtimonia ſuprà citata, p. 378. Quibus adde ſis Spencer. de Legg. Hebræor. Tom. I. p. 363, 364, &c. Marſhami Can. Chronic. pp. 77, 112, 121, 318, &c. 4to. Franequeræ, 1696. et eruditas Grotii annotationes ad Deuter. xviii. 10. ubi locum è Sophoclis Andromedâ citat.

νόμος γάρ ἐστι τοῖσι βαρβάροις Κρόνῳ
Ξυμπολεῖν βρότειον ἀρχαῖθεν γένος.

manâ longiſſimè abhorreat, atque adeò quod Deus, Naturæ iſtius Auctor et Perfector, non poſſit non abominari.

In hâc autem parte argumenti noſtri, ſcrupulus reſtat tantùm unus, in quo eximendo me diutiùs immorari patiar. Quæritur enim, ſi ex lege filiam poſſet Jephtha redimere, cur eam non redemerit? Sacer Hiſtoricus cùm de hâc re omninò taceat, locus non niſi conjecturæ datur. Alii igitur ignorantiæ illud tribuunt; alii magis probabilitèr, uti opinor, magíſque ſimpliciter, ſuperſtitioni. " Non fecit," inquit Clericus, " ſuperſtitione impeditus; quâ timuit ne " Deum offenderet, ſi ullâ ratione videretur, " voti reus, ejus non ſolvendi occaſionem " velle captare. Maluit filiam nunquam " nupturam dare Pontifici Maximo, ut " ſacris, quatenùs licuit, operaretur, quàm " videri poſſe voti religionem ullo modo " violâſſe, quamvis Nepotes ex filiâ videre " ſummoperè cupiiſſet. Hæc ſunt multò " magis rationi conſentanea, quàm ſi quis " Legem ita interpretetur, ut votum legitimum et ritè conceptum habeatur, ſi quis " voverit Deo mactare liberos; nec votum " illud ullâ ratione revocari, aut redimi " poſſit; cùm Deus ſeveriſſimè ejuſmodi ſa-

" crificia

" crificia vetuerit, ac proindè voveri ea ſibi " noluerit." " Videtur autem Jephtheus" (iterum inquit) " noluiſſe redimere filiam, " cùm metu ne votum violaret, tùm etiam " quòd vile viſum fuiſſet votum, ſi triginta " ſiclis Pontifici ſolutis, religione ſolutus " fuiſſet *."

II. VIDEAMUS autem quorsùm valeant illorum argumenta, qui contendant non receptam eſſe apud Hebræos conſuetudinem virginum in Dei miniſterium dicandarum. Quid igitur è verbis ſacri Scriptoris liquidò patet? Scriptum profectò legimus: " Im- " plevit Jephthes votum, et Virgo manſit " filia." At quæ tandem vola eſt, aut quod uſpiàm veſtigium horrendi hujuſce carminis? 'Utei Virginem Pater ad immolationem 'devovit, ita immolator; " I, ſacrificule, " colliga manus. Caput obnubito. Pectus " ferito. Corpus comburito." Sic 'imple- 'vit Jephthes votum ſuum, et virgo immo- 'lata eſt.'—Quid igitur colligendum? Votum Jephthæ eſſe impletum in eo, quòd expers fuerit viri puella.—Ita, an ſecùs, in alias puellas factum fuerit, aliis de cauſſis cum religione conjunctis, id verò non quærimus. Res, quâ de agitur, ſingularis eſt, ſuíque

* Clerici Commentar. ad Vet. Teſtam. Jud. xi. 35.

ſuíque prorſus generis. Nullo alio tempore natam in Jehovæ honorem devoviſſe dicitur pater; imò, ne Jephthes quidem, niſi cæco quodam animi impetu abreptus, commiſiſſet, ut ſua devoveri poſſet. Breviter, uti mos eſt ſacris ſcriptoribus, Hiſtoria hæcce narratur: nec opinari licet rem omnem eâdem eſſe, quâ deſcribitur, celeritate, peractam. Patrem, cùm filiam obviam vidiſſet, dolore fuiſſe perfuſum, pro comperto habemus: tum primùm temerarii voti infelicitas magno et acerbo dolore animum ejus perculit. Illud inſuper veri ſimile eſt multùm eum in animo diúque ſecum perpendiſſe, quânam viâ potiſſimùm oporteret votum à ſe perſolvi, propterea quòd filia ipſius nullo modo potuiſſet immolari. Ad res votivas, quæ non redimerentur, animum procul dubio appulit. Certior idcircò factus eſt agrum, ita devotum, in uſum Pontificis Maximi ex legis præſcripto ceſſurum: neque agrum tantummodò, verùm etiam rem omninò omnem *, quæ ex voto ritè nuncupato inter conſecrata numeraretur. " Cùm igitur filia non " potuit eſſe holocautoma, ſaltèm *fuit Je-*
" *hovæ*;

* " Omnis conſecratio in Iſraël, tibi erit." Num. xviii. 14. Animadvertant lectores vocem חרם hoc in loco uſurpari.

"*hovæ*; hoc eſt" (inquit Clericus) "in ſer-
"vitutem data eſt Pontifici Maximo, qui
"ejus operâ in rebus ſacris uteretur; ex-
"empli cauſſâ, in molendo tritico, undè
"fierent panes ſacri, pinſendâ farinâ, co-
"quendis panibus, veſtibus nendis ac texen-
"dis, aliiſque id genus miniſteriis, quibus
"apta eſſe poterat puella; ita ut nunquam
"(quoniam ſe voto eam in rem obſtrictam
"putabat pater ejus Jephtheus, nec eam re-
"dimere voluit) ab eâ ſervitute liberaretur,
"ſed innupta apud eum ad mortem mane-
"ret *." Innupta, inquam, neceſſe eſt man-ſerit; quoniam haud aliter potuit à conſortio et negotiis hominum penitùs ſejungi; quippè quæ in proprium quoddam Dei miniſterium conſecrata videretur. Etenim apud omnes omninò Gentes, neque minùs forſan apud Hebræos, ea ſemper increbuit opinio, mulieres illas, quæ divinis rebus præcipuè intereſſent, ſervare oportere prorsùs illibatum virginitatis florem.

Postremo, hoc mordicùs tenendum; Jephtham, quùm indiſſolubili quodam pudicitiæ nexu filiam conſtringeret, neque contra legis præſcripta offendiſſe, et pro virili votum adimpleviſſe. Licet ergò erraverit, tamen

* Ad v. 39.

tamen quia piâ mente erravit, neutiquàm ſtatuendum eſt eum Jehovæ ſe inviſum præſtitiſſe. Sin illam immolâſſet, adeò non Dei gratiam iniiſſet, ut è contrario, diſertiſſima legis edicta violando, pœnas vel graviſſimas meritò eſſet daturus. Quas cùm ſubiiſſe eum nuſquàm legimus, minimè credendum eſt eum, poſt maximos cruciatus mortis filiam unicam combuſſiſſe, atque adeò de induſtriâ et ſobrium θύσιαν, vel Joſepho judice, ἔτε νόμιμον, ἔτε τῷ Θεῷ κεχαρισμένην ἐπιτετελέσαι, μὴ διαβασανίσαντα τῷ λογισμῷ τὸ γενησόμενον, ὅιον τὸ πραχθὲν δόξει τοῖς ἀκούσασι *.

PROFECTO arbitror, neque Heroä, neque rerum ab illo geſtarum Scriptorem θεόπνευςον, de Virgine immolandâ ſemel ſomniaviſſe. Sæculorum eſt illud quidem multo poſteriorum, atque hominum, qui ſibi plus æquo videntur ſapere, commentum!

III. ECQUÆ autem, ut tertium illud tractem, ecquæ tanti ejulatûs cauſſa, ſi devota puella virginitatem tantùm retinuerit? " Virginitas," inquit Cappellus, " glorioſa " erat et commendabilis. Aut ſi flere virgi- " nitatem voluit, hoc in monaſterio facien- " dum, ubi lugendi tempus ſatìs longum illi " ſupererat; anteaquàm verò clauderetur, " decuit

* Antiq. Jud. Lib. V. c. vii. ſect. 10.

"decuit potiùs cum amicis vitam agere "lætam."

Ex hujuſcemodi potiſſimùm ſententiâ exortum puto illud erroris, quod hanc quæſtionem turbaverit. Plerique, quia non potuerunt doloris ſatìs validam rationem reddere, in quem incidiſſe et Jephtham et filiam pateat, collegerunt illicò, nullam aliam ob cauſſam, niſi ob mortem obeundam, tales potuiſſe fletus exoriri. Sed in hanc quæſtionis partem è Scriptoribus profanis lucis nonnihil ſplendeſcet. Ab iis planè comparet, gentibus, eâ ferè morum ſpecie quam Iſraëlitæ præ ſe ferrent, iiſdémque ferè de quibus loquimur ſæculis, talem fuiſſe inſitam de honore parentibus debito opinionem, et tantam liberorum gratiam fuiſſe, ut mulieres, quæ ſine liberis morerentur aut ſpe liberorum habendorum, maximè infelices exiſtimarentur. Id perquàm dilucidè oſtendunt tragœdiarum Græcarum Scriptores, qui ſæcula quæ vocantur Heroica tractant; et quos credibile eſt eas perſonis tribuiſſe opiniones, quas traditio aut certior notitia proavis ſuis docuerit eos aſſignare.

At ne quis dubitet idem planè, quod cæteræ gentes cenſuerint, de fecunditate matronarum ſenſiſſe Iſraëlitas, ſpes illa, quam vel

vel à primis populi incunabulis quiſque conceperat, fore ut ex ipſius familiâ Meſſias ille, tam diu expectatus, támque avidè exoptatus, oriretur, ad augendam etiam opinionem de matrimonii præſtantiâ apud alios receptam, non potuit non valere. Idque, per annales Patriarcharum *; per Saræ, Rachelis, et Hannæ, poſtea quàm ſterilitatis probrum ab iis amotum fuiſſet, alacritatem et lætitiam; quinetiam per nonnulla † Moſis inſtituta, auctum et confirmatum videmus.

Ad Tragœdos autem Græcos redeamus, quoniam ii et argumento noſtro et ſacræ etiam hiſtoriæ plurimum luminis offundunt. In fabulis eorum, ſi qua Virgo inducatur, ſine partûs ſpe peritura, ſemper illam invenimus dolore perfuſam et edentem ejulatus, eâ vel maximè de cauſſâ, quòd innupta et ſine liberis ſit moritura. Quòd immaturus ei immineret interitus, quòd è parentûm amplexu ſit abripienda, quòd dulciſſimo amicorum et ὁμηλίκων privanda in æternum conſortio, hæc, inquam, omnia, utcunque acerba, non tamen ſolæ ſunt lacrymarum cauſſæ. Illud enim graviter et præ

* Gen. xvi. 4. xxi. 6. xxx. 1, 13, 20, 23. Vid. etiam 1 Sam. i. 8, 11. 2 Sam. vi. 23. and xx. 3.

† Exod. xiii. 14, 15. Deut. xxi. 15. xxv. 5. Ruth iv. 14. Vid. etiam Levit. xx. 20. et Jerem. xxii. 30.

præ cæteris deplorant, propter quod Jephthæ filiam deploraviſſe leginus, ſcilicet ἐπὶ τὰ παρθένια. Antigonam audiamus, cùm ei mors impenderet, verſiculis hiſce triſtiſſimis lugentem:

Καὶ νῦν ἄγει με δι' ἀ χερῶν ἕτω λαβὼν
ἄλεκτρον, ἀνυμέναιον, ἔτε τε γάμε
μέρος λαχεῖσαν, ἔτε παιδείε τροφῆς *.

Regia illa et fortis virgo, Polyxena, quæ mortem, tanquam aufugium a ſervitute et infortuniis amicum, oppetebat, annon hoc ipſum reperiebat maximè dolendum, quòd ad inferos deſcenderet,

ἄνυμφος, ἀνυμέναιος, ὧν μ' ἐχρῆν τυχεῖν †;

Hecubæ etiam, matris amantiſſimæ, graviſſimis quibus exanimabatur vulneribus ſtimulum illud ſubdit acriorem, quòd funeris honore ſit proſecutura

νύμφην τ' ἄνυμφον, παρθένον τ' ἀπάρθενον ‡.

Oreſti, profectò cùm ipſe moriturus morituræ valedicit Sorori, nulla videtur eſſe acerbior doloris cauſſa, quàm quòd nuptiarum illa ſit expers: ídque, cùm Pyladi, quem unicè ipſe diligeret, piè ſanctéque eſſet deſponſa. Apud nos autem, iiſdem in malis verſatos, non

* Antig. 916. † Hec. 420. ‡ Hec. 616.

non iiſdem eſſet verbis concepta fratris ſororem alloquentis valedictio:

ὦ ϛέρν' ἀδελφῆς, ὦ φίλον πρόσπτυγμ' ἐμὸν,
τάδ' ἀντὶ παίδων καὶ γαμηλίου λέχους
προσφθέγμαθ' ἡμῖν τοῖς ταλαιπώροις πάρα*.

Ipſa denique Iphigenia (quam ne Ethnici quidem voluerunt re verâ fuiſſe immolatam) cùm officio, quod parenti debebat, ſatisfacere cuperet, et ad interitum rueret voluntarium, magnitudinem animi præcipuè, viſa eſt ideò oſtentare, quòd παῖδας καὶ γάμους † poſthaberet gloriæ nominis ſempiternæ. Verùm enimverò eidem virgini, cùm ab amicis et parentibus longiſſimè ſemota, patriam reviſendi ſpem omnem abjeciſſet, vitámque degëret inter barbaros, imò ἀνθρωποκτόνες, mæſtiſſimam; huic, inquam miſeriarum, quibus angebatur, multarum ſumma videbatur in eo poſita fuiſſe, quòd è vitâ eſſet, non ἄπολις ſolùm καὶ ἄφιλος, verùm etiam ἄγαμος καὶ ἄτεκνος ‡, diſceſſura—Haud abſimilem videmus fuiſſe parentûm ſolicitudinem, ut filiæ nuptum collocentur ||. Inter varia rei hujuſce exempla, unum tantummodò proferam, et illud quidem patris, virgines, quas ipſius et

* Oreſt. 1047. † Iph. in Aul. 1409.
‡ Iph. Taur. 220.
|| Iph. in Aul. 626, 630. Alceſt. 320.

error nuptiarum ſpe privaviſſet, acerbiſſimè deplorantis.

Ἀλλ' ἡνίκ' ἄν δὴ πρὸς γάμων ἵκητ' ἀκμὰς,
τίς ἔτος ἔσαι; — — —
— — — κἄτα τίς γαμεῖ;
οὐκ ἔστιν ἥδεὶς, ὦ τεκν' ἀλλὰ δήλαδὴ
χέρσους φθαρῆναι κἀγάμους ὑμᾶς χρεών ‡.

QUIN

* Œd. Tyr. 1492. 1500.—Monendus eſt lector de ſenſu τῦ φθαρῆναι. "φθείρεσθαι," inquit Brunckius, "ſignificat πλανᾶσθαι, quod ipſe Œdipus ſtatim oſtendit, quùm quarto pòſt verſu ſubjicit μὴ σφε περιίδῃς ἀλωμένας. Hoc ſenſu occurrit φθείρεσθαι apud Euripidis Helenam,

— — — πόσοῦ χρόνου
πόντου 'πὶ νώτοις ἅλιον ἰφθείρω πλάνον; 783.

In Electrâ, 234. ὐχ ἵνα νομίζων φθείρεται πόλεως νόμον. et paſſim. Vid. Abreſch. ad Æſchylum, p. 207. et nos ad Comici Concion. 284." Vid. Brunck. ad loc. Conferas Eurip. Androm. 709. 716.

Notandum eſt etiam, vocem illam apud pedeſtres Scriptores eundem ſenſum habere. Sic enim ſcribit Demoſthenes in Orat. περὸς τὸν Φιλίππου ἐπιστόλην. Οἱ δ' ἄλλοι ἅπαντες καταλιπόντες οἴκους, τέκνα, γονεῖς, γυναῖκας, φθείρεσθαι, καὶ καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν κινδυνεύειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῦ. Edit. Allen. Tom. I. p. 165.

Legimus in Appiani Roman. Hiſt. Præfatione, cap. x. φθαρέντων ἐς ἀλλήλους· quem ad locum celeberrimus Schweighæuſer ita ſcribit. "φθείρεσθαι ἐς ἀλλήλους, eodem modo dicitur, ut alibi συντρίβεσθαι ἐς ἀλλήλους. Civ. iii. 499, 70. quo pacto φθείρεσθαι περὸς τὰς πλουτίους apud Demoſth. (contra Midiam, Tom. I. p. 560. Ed. Reiſk.) ſcitè Reiſkius in Ind. interpretatus eſt *cum contentione, quaſi certatim, concurrere, ruere, ferri ad divites, ad horum divitum fraudem peſtémque.* Et generatim φθείρεσθαι Atticis ſcriptoribus (quorum utique ſtylum æmulatus Appianus eſt) ſignificat *ire, vagari, concurrere in ſuam vel aliorum pernicièm.*" Schweigh. ad Appian. Tom. III. p. 333.

QUIN et civilia apud varias gentes inſtituta abundè evincunt habitum fuiſſe ſummum matronis honorem, vetántque ne miremur virgines nuptiarum deſiderio periiſſe. Ne quis autem, cùm adduxerim virgines paullò ante mortem ἐπὶ τὰ παρθένια plangentes, cauſſam ideò meam infirmare me opinetur! Equidem fateor illas, cùm mox obituræ eſſent, hos queſtus edidiſſe. An verò credibile eſt, eaſdem fore leviore perfuſas triſtitiâ quod ἄγαμοι eſſent et ἄτεκνοι, ſi perpetuæ virginitati fuiſſent devotæ? Cùm virgines mortem obituræ eſſent, etſi ad omnia, quæ ex omni parte ingruebant, mala animum advertebant; at virginitatem tamen potiùs quàm mortem ipſam lugere videbantur. Hæc igitur quæ dixi clarè pleneque oſtendunt, virginitatem, cui Jephthæ filia devota eſſet, ſatìs in cauſsâ fuiſſe cur ægritudine gravi turbaretur, multúmque (ut ſunt mulieres timidæ imbecilléſque) et diu ejularet. Huc accedit, quòd in Sacrâ Hiſtoriâ minimè traditum eſt, Virginem hancce ob aliud ullum, præter id unum et quidem inſigne, quod memoravi, malum fuiſſe lamentatam. Virgines, quarum in Græcis fabulis mentio facta eſt, ideò luxerunt, cùm quòd morituræ, tùm quòd cœlibes

eſſent: Jephthæ autem filia id tantummodò deplorat, quòd die nuptiali eſſet caritura. Illud inſuper eſt ſilentio minimè prætereundum, Jephthæ filiam ad lamentandam virginitatem temporis quoddam ſpatium petiiſſe. Quorsùm autem tantum temporis valeret, ſi ad mortem eſſet deſtinata? Si quod homini infortunium accidit, de quo, ne multos ſit aut etiam paucos per annos duraturum, pertimeſcendum ſit, aliquantulum is neceſſe eſt temporis inſumat, quo naturam mali examinet, modúmque ejus vel perferendi vel levandi ediſcat. Amicorum aut liberorum amiſſio, à proſperis rebus præceps fortunæ immutatio, membrorum ob valetudinem minimè ſanam privatio, moræ nonnihil requirunt, in quâ moleſtiis diuturnioribus, quæ ſubitò devorari nequeant, paullatim concoquendis mens ſeſe aſſuefaciat. Profectò in animo perindè ac corpore ita evenire ſolet, ut onus, quod impetu uno nobis impoſitum vires noſtras infringat ac debilitet, idem, ſi ſenſim et gradatim imponatur, levius ad ſuſtinendum fiat.—Longè alia ſive metûs ſive doloris ratio eſt, quoties immaturus et penè violentus interitus, quem effugere quiſpiam nequeat, adeſſe atque impendere ei videtur. Spes enim vivendi cùm omninò

omninò omnis evaneſcit, mors quodammodò ipſa minus in ſe acerbitatis habere, quàm "mora mortis *," plerumque exiſtimatur.

ITA comparata eſt hominum natura, ut poſſeſſiones, quæ incertæ caducæque ſint, aut vi quâdam neceſſitatis aliò abituræ, vehementiùs ii amplectantur. Solent præterea animi mulierum impetu cupiditatum ſuarum temerè æſtuare, et levi quovis momento huc atque illuc flecti dividique. Jephthæ igitur filiæ, ſi re verâ moritura eſſet, potuit in mentem venire ὁμηλικίης περιηθέος †—potuit ei Solis lux alma, quam brevi haud aſpectura eſſet, dulciùs ad intuendum

* Ovid. Epiſt. Ariadn. v. 84.

† Tale quiddam videtur Medeæ contigiſſe, cùm de ſe interficiendâ cogitaret, et foramen arculæ letalis aperuiſſet.

Ἦ, καὶ φωριαμὸν μετικίαθεν, ἦ ἔνι πολλὰ
Φάρμακά οἱ, τὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ, τὰ δὲ ᾗσιν ἔκειτο.
Ἐνθεμένη δ' ἐπὶ γέναϊ' ὀδύρετο· δεινὸ δὲ κόλπως
Ἄλληκτον δακρύοισι, τὰ δ' ἔρρεεν ἀγαγὶς αὔτως,
Αἶν' ὀλοφυρομένης τὸν ἓὸν μόρον. ἵετο δ' ἦγε
Φάρμακα λέξασθαι θυμοφθόρα, ὄφρα πάσαιτο·
Ἤδη καὶ δισμὲς ἀνελύετο φωριαμοῖο,
Ἐξελέειν μεμαυῖα δυσάμμορος. ἀλλά οἱ ἄφνω
Δεῖμ' ὀλοὸν συγερσῖο κατὰ φρένας ἦλθ' Ἀΐδαο.
Ἔσχετο δ' ἀμφασίη δηρὸν χρόνον, ἀμφὶ δὲ πᾶσαι
Θυμηδεῖς βιότοιο μελεδόνες ἰνδάλλοντο.
Μνήσατο μὲν τερπνῶν, ὅσ' ἐνὶ ζωοῖσι φέλονται,
Μνήσαθ' ὁμηλικίης περιηθέος, οἷά τε κέρη·
Καὶ τέ οἱ ἠέλιος γλυκίων γένετ' εἰσοράᾶσθαι
Ἢ πάρος, εἰ ἐτεόν γε νόῳ ἐπεμαίετ' ἔμαρσα.

Apollon. Rhod. Lib. III. 802.

endum niteſcere—res denique omnes, quæ juvenilibus animis gratæ ſunt, leto jam inſtante, multo gratiores fieri potuerunt. Illud etiam credibile eſt, Virginem, quæ ſe ad necem eſſe deſtinatam ſentiret, voluiſſe inter lacrymas comitum ſuarum dilectiſſimarum blandis ſuæ ægrimoniæ alloquiis paulliſper frui: et quicquid ſibi in κειμηλίοις ſuis olim pretioſiſſimum fuiſſet, defixis oculis ſupremùm contemplari *. Verùm enimverò à ſenſibus et moribus humanis prorsùs abhorret, ut per duos ſolidos menſes ea de induſtriâ faceret vel pateretur, quibus faciundis vel patiendis paucæ horæ ſuffeciſſent. Quicquid à patre ſuo fuerat in Dei honorem de ſe ipsâ ſtatutum, illud probè nôrat ratum et fixum futurum, quàm quod maximè. Sibi igitur ſi moriendum eſſet, nihil ei debebat optabilius videri, quàm ut malo, quod ipſi ultimum et acerbiſſimum inſtaret, morâ vix ullâ interpoſitâ, defungeretur.—Itaque Jephthæ filia, ſi Virginitati eſſet devota, rectè et prudenter ſpatium temporis petiit, in quo Virginitatem plangeret; in

* Sic de Eliſâ, cùm "cœptis immanibus effera, et pallida morte futurâ" eſſet, pulcerrimè ſcribit Virgilius:

Hic, poſtquàm Iliacas veſtes notúmque cubile
Conſpexit, *paullùm* lacrymis et mente *morata*,
Incubuítque toro, dixítque noviſſima verba:
"Dulces exuviæ, &c. Æn. IV. 648.

in quo ſolita vitæ gaudia et gaudiorum comites lentè et pedetentim relinqueret; in quo à priſtinâ vivendi conſuetudine, tanquam à lacte, paullatim depulſa nova illa, ut ita dicam, alimenta non nimiùm formidaret et aufugeret. Sin autem morti fuiſſet deſtinata, nulla ſatis idonea reddi poteſt ratio, cur duos rogaret menſes, ídque porrò non ut mortem ſed virginitatem lugeret.

Quæ cùm ita ſint, ſatis proculdubio cauſſæ nobis apparebit, cur et Jephtha et filia ejus tanto mœrore afficerentur: ſiquidem hæc expers mariti omnes illos honores et gaudia amiſit, quibus matronæ fruerentur; ille eſt familiæ ulteriùs prorogandæ ſpe deſtitutus, et unicam filiam graviſſimo vidit oppreſſam infortunio.

Hæc itaque ſi quis reputaverit, ſatis, arbitror, tribus illis argumentis reſponſum credet, quæ noſtras contra partes potiſſimùm ſteterint: neque ab adverſariis, quod ſciam, aliquid ultrà objectum eſt, in quo refellendo operæ pretium ſit me diutiùs immorari. Nihil igitur reſtat, quàm ut locum huncce ſacri Scriptoris, prout res ipſa ſe nobis auctorem præſtat, et Hebraici textûs verba poſtulant, accipiamus. Id ſaltem maximoperè cavendum eſt, ne ratas Interpretationis leges

et

et perſpectas Critices normas ita tranſgrediamur, ut Hiſtorici verba ad eum ſenſum detorqueamus, qui, cùm viros ſapientes et pios vehementiſſimè offendat, tùm Infidelium captiunculis atque irriſioni auguſtum illud et venerandum Religionis nomen objiciat *.

* Quoniam permultùm valere exiſtimata eſt quorundam Scriptorum auctoritas, in primis Judæorum, qui in alia omnia de hâc quæſtione pedibus iverunt, minimè à me prætermittenda videtur Davidis Kimchi ſententia, uti à doctiſſimo viro, Joanne Marſhamo, profertur.

"Alii interpretantur" (nempè in Jud. xi. 31.) "*et* pro *aut*, ut disjunctivi vim habeat; quaſi dixiſſet, *Erit Domino conſecratum, ſi non ſit idoneum holocauſto; aut offeram in holocauſtum, ſi fuerit holocauſto idoneum.*" *Sic* et *ſumitur pro* aut *in Lege*, Qui *percuſſerit patrem* et *matrem: Atque hæc interpretatio pulcra eſt.* Jephthæ occurrit filia unica; *et fecit ſicut voverat*, id eſt, *fecit ei domum, et introduxit in eam*, atque *ibi manſit ſeclusa à filiis hominum et à rebus ſecularibus. Atque ſtatutum eſt in Iſraël, ut quotannis eam inviſerent Iſraëlitides.* Pater præ dolore *veſtimenta laceravit*, quòd nulla prolis ex filiâ ſuſcipiendæ ſpes eſſet reliqua." Vid. Canon. Chroniç. p. 170. Franequer. 1696.

Quæ doctiſſimus Kimchi dixit de vitâ cœlibe in loco, qui à mundanis rebus longè ſejunctus eſſet, peragendâ, in mentem mihi revocant aliud eorum perfugium, qui contendunt Jephthæ filiam eſſe pro victimâ oblatam. Aiunt nimirùm, neque per tribum ejus, neque per ſexum, ei licuiſſe ſacris miniſteriis unquam ullis operam dare. Nemini enim, niſi maribus qui è tribu Levi eſſent oriundi, res ad divinum cultum pertinentes adminiſtrare conceſſum fuiſſe *. Reſpondeo igitur,

1mo. Πρόβλημα, quod in controverſiam venit, non eò ſpectare, ſítne Jephthæ filia, nécne, defuncta officio aliquo quod cum ſacerdotii jure conjunctum eſſet;—ſed in hoc tanquam cardine verſari, utrùm patris votum per immolationem Virginis, an per cœlibem ejus vitam fixum ratúmque ſteterit. Veriſſimum autem judico, tùm ex lege Moſis, tùm ex Sacræ Scripturæ

* Vid. Jenningſii Antiquit. Judaic. Tom. I. p. 61.

Scripturæ verbis diſertis in h. l. ad aras Jehovæ eam non fuiſſe trucidatam; ſed eâ tantummodò neceſſitate aſtrictam, ut nemini in matrimonium traderetur. Quicquid eſt ultrà, cùm ſileant de eo Sacri Scriptores, à conjecturis, non probationibus, neceſſe eſt pendeat. Me tamen fateor calculum meum adjicere viris benè multis atque eruditis, qui putant haudquaquam eſſe vero abſimile, virginem noſtram Summo Sacerdoti in ſervitutem fuiſſe addictam, atque adeò nonnullis rebus ad Dei cultum pertinentibus ſtudium quoddam impendiſſe.

2do. Illud adverſarios velim rogatos, Summo Sacerdoti licuerit, nécne, famulas Iſraëliticas è quâvis tribu conducere, atque etiam mancipia ab externis gentibus coëmpta poſſidere? Profectò, horum miniſteria quò minùs in uſus ſuos adhiberent, ut ſacerdotibus interdictum ſit, tantùm abeſt, ut mercenariorum et mancipiorum, quorum opere uti deberent, mentio diſertè facta ſit in libro Levitici. "Omnis alienigena non comedet de ſanctificatis, inquilinus ſacerdotis et mercenarius non veſcentur ex eis. Quem autem ſacerdos emerit, et qui vernaculus domûs ejus fuerit, hi comedent ex eis." cap. xxii. comm. 10, 11.

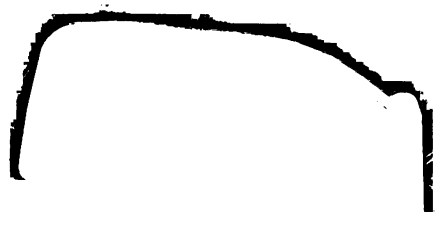
Genera officiorum, in quibus credibile ſit mercenarios istiusmodi verſari, recenſuit Clericus: "exempli cauſsâ, in "molendo tritico, undè fierent panes ſacri, in pinſendâ farinâ, "coquendis panibus, veſtibus nendis ac texendis, aliiſque id "genus miniſteriis, quibus apta eſſe poterat puella." ad v. 39. —Minimè hæc videntur munera illius eſſe generis, ut à nemine perfici poſſent, niſi ab eo qui de proſapiâ Levitarum eſſet. Idcircò ea cum ſacris rebus aliquam cognationem habuiſſe videri poterant, quòd in uſum Summi Pontificis præſtita fuerint. Quò autem plus laboris vel fœditatis in conditione Virginis eſſet, eò pleniùs voto ſuo ſe ſatisfeciſſe pater ejus arbitrari debuit.

Ut hæc ſunt, Jephthæ filia vitam cœlibem agere potuit, licet à rebus ſacris peragendis omninò abſtineret.

Quod ad eos attinet, qui exiſtimant, legem Moſaicam pariter violatam eſſe, ſeu quis filiam ſuam virginitati perpetuæ devoviſſet, ſeu immolandam tradidiſſet ſacerdoti, eorum profectò argumenta è libellis Stoicorum, quibus peccata ferè paria eſſe placuerit, potiùs quàm ex præceptis Moſaicis deprompta eſſe crediderim.

Tandem verò ad Marſhamum redeamus. In interpretando illo Levitici loco (ſcil. xxvii. 28, 29.) neutiquàm pari judicio, ut

ut mihi videtur, rem geſſit vir ille eruditus. Scilicet τὸ [illegible] cum quibuſdam doctis viris, de eo, "quicquid jure Belli interceſſit devotum," interpretatur. pag. 169. Junius contrà et Tremellius *hoſtiam* vertunt; idque, me ſaltem judice, omninò rectè; modò per *hoſtiam*, ea, quæ munda ſit ideóque huiocaudo idonea, intelligatur.

FINIS.

YC158776